

# THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor: R. PALME<sup>1</sup>DUTT

Volume 15

January, 1933

Number 1

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Book Review

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# NOTES OF THE MONTH

1932-1933—*War Issues—Capitalist Outlooks—Debts Controversy—Anglo-American Antagonism—Far Eastern Crisis—Britain and Japan—Armaments—Lausanne—British-French Entente—Ottawa—Debts in Perspective—Breakdown of Stabilisation—Predictions of 1925—Capitalist Illusions—New Illusions on War Debts—Debts Dilemmas—Balfour Note Humbug—Britain as World Usurer—To Pay or Not to Pay—Capitalism and Debt—American Policy—Cancellation No Solution*

**W**HAT has 1932 shown? What is the outlook for 1933? We are now in the fourth year of the present world crisis of capitalism. In every respect the crisis has grown greater and not less. More than that. The crisis has not only grown greater in every economic measure, in unemployment, in falling production and trade, in lower and again lower standards and greater misery of the mass of the population in every capitalist country. The present stage of the crisis goes further. Since the autumn of 1931 the political shattering effects of the crisis have been increasingly in the forefront. Sharp political changes, inner social struggles, growing imperialist conflicts and the deepening shadow of war—this has been the later development of the crisis. The decisive character of 1932 has been the growth of world conflicts and war issues, arising inevitably out of the particular policies of the capitalist Powers in the face of the crisis. From the bombardment of Shanghai at the beginning of the year, through the long-drawn fiasco of the Disarmament Conference, to the open conflict of the major Powers over the debts issue at the close, the same character has shown itself. All the issues of 1932—the Far Eastern crisis, disarmament (a thinly-veiled form of armaments conflict), the tariff-war, the debts controversy, the gold fight, the German crisis and the issues in Europe, the colonial

struggles (India, Ireland, Persia), and the anti-Soviet intervention campaign—all go forward in an aggravated form to 1933. It is urgent for all to see the warning-signals of where the crisis is leading, under the reckless guidance of the existing capitalist governments, to violence and destruction without equal.

**T**AKE for a moment the major issues on a world scale of 1932, and it is impossible not to see the single line running through them, of capitalism moving to a violent solution of the crisis. First, at the beginning of the year, the bombardment of Shanghai and the violent conquest of Manchuria, leading to the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo and the Lytton recommendation of an autonomous régime under joint imperialist advisers (*i.e.*, the partition of China). Second, the “Disarmament” Conference, laying bare the rival armaments plans of all the imperialist Powers in irreconcilable antagonism. Third, the British-French Entente at Lausanne, visibly directed against America and the Soviet Union, and hedged round with secret agreements and a fog of secret diplomacy. Fourth, the British tariff-war and drawing together of the Empire at Ottawa for the offensive against America. Fifth, the German militarist dictatorship, developing from Brüning to von Papen, and, finally, to Schleicher, and the demand for German re-arming. Sixth, the British-Soviet trade break. Seventh, the Anglo-American and French-American debts controversy. This is the continuous development of world capitalist statesmanship through 1932 in the face of the desperate needs of the economic crisis. Of attempt at constructive solution of the crisis there is not even a pretence. The picture is a picture of rival gangster governments fighting each for its own hand in the midst of the growing debacle. Against this, stands out the only constructive achievement of 1932 throughout the world, the advance of the Soviet Union and completion of the Five-Year Plan in four years. The reaction of capitalism to this constructive achievement is expressed in the breaking of the Trade Agreement and preparation of intervention.

**T**HE expressions of the capitalist statesmen, so far as they rarely turn aside from their immediate objectives of policy to the general situation, reflect increasingly the consciousness of two things : first, that the whole system of capitalist civilisation is now in the balance, is under question, and may not be destined to survive ; and second, that war, which they alternately fear and yet calculate on, is drawing close. Introducing his emergency economic programme in September, von Papen said that the next twelve months would be decisive :

The future of the German economic structure, and therewith of the State, would be decided in this time. Let me say one thing with all emphasis. If the Government's plan miscarries, which is to restore the German economic organisation to its full efficiency through the medium of private enterprise, if this plan miscarries, then private enterprise is lost. (*Times*, September 13, 1932.)

The same note, with lesser emphasis, is visible through the utterances of Hoover, Baldwin or Montagu Norman. The war note is no less continuous. We have the declaration of Baldwin in the House of Commons in November :

I do not think we have seen the last great war.

Similarly of Lloyd George in October :

There are more serious misunderstandings of the kind that make war at this moment in every continent than I can ever recall in the whole of my life.

The former Editor of the *Times*, Wickham Steed, recalling the clearness with which the last war made itself felt in the years beforehand, writes :

I see to-day that war may be coming as clearly as I saw it twenty-three years ago. Before it comes there may be a period, not of disarmament, but of re-armament. (*Contemporary Review*, August, 1932.)

The process of " re-armament " is already in full swing. The war budgets of all the Powers between 1928 and 1932 show a heavy increase.

**T**HE Debts controversy, bringing into the open the public conflict of Britain and America in an exchange of notes not equalled since the exchanges of 1920, has thrown a flood of light on the whole stage of international

relations. The significance of the debts question lies, not so much in the problem of the debts themselves, which is not insoluble, as in the relations of Britain and America revealed by it at the present stage. The question of the debts cannot be treated abstractly and in isolation, as if it were some peculiar unfortunate difficulty cutting across the otherwise harmonious field of Anglo-American relations, or some technical question of figures and balances, relative receipts and outgoings, the problem of transfer, &c. Behind the debts question lies the whole range of rising Anglo-American antagonism in every field—over the Far Eastern question, over Ottawa, over armaments. The United States has consistently used the debts claim, not so much as any indispensable source of income for itself (during the years of budget surpluses this aspect was of very minor importance), but above all as a strategic weapon, exercised against the other Powers, and principally and most heavily against its main rival, Britain. Britain, on the other hand, has consistently fought for cancellation, but has been prevented by its own overwhelming creditor position throughout the world from considering any one-sided action without American consent. On this basis the duel of the past twelve years has been fought.

**B** RITISH expression is disposed to take on an injured tone, as if it were the most innocent party in the world, struggling manfully to pay most unjust obligations, and confronted with an obdurate and egoistic Shylock. The fact that for a century Britain has been playing the part of the same Shylock to the world, with merciless insistence bleeding the most poverty-stricken populations, and is at this moment conducting this same fight for brigands' tribute against Ireland (annuities, in this case, not even in return for any goods at all, but for land-robbery) causes not a moment's qualm to the hypocritical editors, parsons and politicians who cry out at American extortion. But more than that. It is perfectly obvious that British Imperialism has during the past year been conducting a most active offensive against America, inevitably and quite calculably leading to the present debts

retaliation. The consciousness of this is essential to British working class opinion, in order that it shall not be misled by current propaganda into regarding the debts question as a simple abstract question of debtor and creditor, but see it correctly as a phase in the battle of two imperialist giants, each equally steeped in records of blood and usury, and against whom the American and British workers are equally united to fight.

**T**HE Far Eastern crisis runs far deeper in Anglo-American relations than the debts question. From the outset British and French policy have most openly and shamelessly supported Japanese brigandage, assisted it with money and munitions, conducted world-wide press propaganda in its defence, and protected it with diplomatic camouflage through the League, not so much through unity of interests with Japan (there are important and visible differences of interest in relation to the Chinese spoils), but in the unity of a common front against America and against the Soviet Union. Through the Stimson notes and letters of the beginning of the year, American imperialism sought repeatedly for British co-operation against Japan, for the joint invocation of the openly violated Washington Nine-Power Treaty, and offered, through semi-official channels, counter-concessions, with special reference to the debts, in return for such joint action. As the *Times* Washington correspondent wrote on January 27 :

The spectacle of Anglo-American solidarity at this time might—or certainly would—have a repercussion highly favourable to other matters still in suspense. (January 27, 1932.)

The reference is here to the debts. Its significance was made further clear by a speech at the same time of the Republican Senator Reed, who, according to the *Times*, was understood to be speaking for the Government. He referred to the question of the debts and the “difficulties” of certain nations, and went on :

I have in mind, for example, the situation of Great Britain. . . . It is inconceivable that the United States would not sympathetically consider a temporary adjustment. (*Times*, January 18, 1932.)

America was in fact offering a bargain : an understanding with regard to the debts in return for a joint front against the admittedly lawless action of Japan in the Far East. In this way American imperialism sought to utilise its debts advantage for its wider diplomatic purposes, and to press Britain into retreat.

**T**HIS offer fell on stony ground in Britain. Co-operation was refused, and the joint front against America, with the inevitable consequence in relation to the debts, deliberately preferred. As the *Times* frankly admitted with reference to the Stimson January Note :

Admittedly this co-operation was lacking at the time of the dispatch of the United States' Note to China and Japan on January 7th. (January 27, 1932.)

The same followed the still more important Stimson letter to Borah of February 24 (which included the threat to regard the whole set of the Washington Treaties as invalidated, and to resume the naval race). The effect of the British refusal on American opinion is reported as follows by the *Daily Telegraph* (February 27, 1932) :

There would appear to be some feeling in America over the disinclination of Great Britain to associate herself with the line of argument and action adopted by Mr. Stimson in his letter to Senator Borah. British aloofness, however, in this regard is at least as natural as is America's refusal to co-operate with the League.

Mr. Stimson's letter apparently assumes on the part of Japan certain violations of both the Kellogg Pact and the Washington Nine-Power Treaties of 1922. Such assumptions or presumptions would be highly improper, as well as inopportune, on the part of Great Britain. As a member of the League, it would ill become her to prejudge Geneva's verdict.

Again, Japan has repeatedly emphasised in recent months her resolve to respect the open door in China and to withdraw her troops as soon as she has secured guarantees for her nationals.

Great Britain would not feel justified in doubting the word of her old friend and former ally.

Some concern is felt in London about those passages in Mr. Stimson's letter which suggest that America might wish to revise in

an upward sense the limitations stipulated by the Washington and London Naval Treaties. . . . In this case an awkward position would be created for Great Britain.

The flagrant character of British policy in openly supporting the lawless aggression of Japan, and inviting conflict with the United States, is here directly expressed. Japan is the "old friend and former ally"; the suggestion that the Kellogg Pact or Washington Nine-Power Treaty (which guaranteed the integrity of all Chinese territory, including Manchuria, from attack, with the signatures also of Japan and Britain) has been violated, is an "assumption or presumption" to be rejected as "highly improper"; Japan's promises "to respect the open door in China and to withdraw her troops" must be accepted (on which Manchukuo is the sufficient comment of subsequent facts); even the American naval threat, though admittedly "awkward," is faced and accepted.

**L**IBERAL opinion in England was alarmed at this dangerous anti-American line. The *Manchester Guardian* openly charged British policy with responsibility for the Japanese aggression; a joint stand with the United States would have compelled Japan to abandon her project:

It was not done mainly because of the complete failure of Great Britain, as the League Power most directly concerned, either to give a lead on the League Council or adequately to support the United States in insisting on the sanctity of the Nine-Power Treaty and the Kellogg Pact. *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, February 26, 1932.)

The *Economist* (commenting on the statement of the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the House of Commons that "there did not appear to be any ground for action by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom under the Nine-Power Treaty of 1922") declared:

This comes perilously near to British collusion with Japanese policy in Manchuria. Moreover, it is the second occasion on which our Government has conspicuously disassociated itself from the action of the American Government when the application of the Nine-Power Treaty has been in question *à-propos* of Manchuria. Have our Government well considered whither this line of action will lead them? (February 27, 1932.)

There was no question where it would lead. The relation to the debts has been already noted. The naval threat was no less open. On the same day that the Stimson letter was published, a bill was sent to the Senate authorising the expenditure of a billion dollars on new naval construction.

This warning is all the more apparent because of the action taken by the Senate Naval Affairs Committee on the same day that the Stimson statement was published. The committee sent to the Senate with its approval a bill authorising the expenditure of approximately a billion dollars on new naval construction. The significance of this action was certainly not lost upon the other Powers. It cannot be held that there was no connection between the two events. (New York *Nation*, March 9, 1932.)

Thus the Anglo-American antagonism, developing over the Far Eastern crisis, had already by the beginning of 1932 reached the full strategic plane.

**T**HIS was the first stage. The next stage comes with Lausanne. At Lausanne Britain and France liquidated their immediate differences in relation to Germany and endeavoured to draw together the common European front against America. This was the dominant significance of Lausanne, and especially of the "Gentlemen's Agreement" which remained outside the official Lausanne Agreement and constituted its real key. The policy was further underlined by the British-French Entente signed immediately after on July 12. This meaning of Lausanne was equally clear on both sides. MacDonald, in defending the agreement in the House of Commons, was concerned to insist that there was no question of an "ultimatum to the United States." Or as the *Times* no less insisted :

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that there is no idea of forming a united European front against America. (July 14, 1932.) President Hoover took these denials at their obvious value :

While I do not assume it to be the purpose of any of these agreements to effect the combined action of our debtors, if it shall be so interpreted, then I do not propose that the American people shall be pressed into any line of action or that our policy shall in any way be influenced by such a combination, whether open or implied. (Hoover letter to Borah on Lausanne, *Times*, July 15, 1932.)

The American delegation at Geneva was reported by the British United Press correspondent to have received the news of the British-French Entente as a "thunderbolt" and implying the "isolation of their country" (*Daily Herald*, July 14, 1932). The Hoover Disarmament Plan had been launched just before as a counter-offensive during the sittings of Lausanne, and was being busily smothered by Britain and France.

**B**RITISH satisfaction at the success of the combined European front at Lausanne, and at the prospect of exerting pressure on America, is revealed in the message of the *Times* Washington correspondent :

In his letter to Senator Borah, Mr. Hoover's final phrase, with its suggestion that, impliedly or potentially, Europe may be drawing together, is a straw showing the way that discussion in high quarters is proceeding just now. For if Europe can or does hold together, if the Anglo-French Declaration draws yet other Powers within its orbit, it is assumed here that the question of American isolation, and of the acceptance of all that isolation would involve, may be presented to the "isolationists" of this country in rather uncomfortable form. . . .

This would be true in the case of inter-governmental obligations. Whatever politicians may say just now, there is no doubt in any authoritative quarter that a realist and not isolationist policy will be forced upon whatever Administration the United States should be given as the result of the election to come. And it would be equally true in the matter of disarmament, for if agreement within Europe is reached, there will be no alternative to an increase in the armed strength of the United States to the point that isolation demands—with all that would imply of alarm in other parts of the Western Hemisphere. (*Times*, July 16, 1932.)

"If Europe can or does hold together." "If agreement within Europe is reached." This is the recurrent note. Then, it is calculated, an "uncomfortable" position will be reached for the American policy hitherto pursued. "If agreement within Europe is reached, there will be no alternative to an increase in the armed strength of the United States." Once again the strategic issue comes at once to the front in the calculations of these Kellogg Pact Powers.

**L**AUSANNE thus marked the second stage of the developing Anglo-American antagonism during 1932. The third stage came with Ottawa. That the spear-point of Ottawa was directed principally against America needs no demonstration. 44 per cent. of the exports of the United States in the period immediately preceding the crisis went to the British Empire. American exports to the British Dominions had actually reached a total higher than the British. The attempt to establish a tariff ring at Ottawa, partially achieved by Britain only at the cost of extremely onerous concessions to the Dominions, is a direct blow at America. The leader of the Republican majority in the House of Representatives, Rainey, is reported to have declared that Ottawa represented a policy "most dangerous for the United States." He estimated that \$1,600 millions, or £320 millions, representing the total of American exports to the British Empire, were at stake.

A policy of high tariff walls around the British Empire is a most dangerous policy for us.

(Reported in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, July 22, 1932.)

The total of \$1,600 millions is, of course, misleading. But the Department of Commerce is stated to have officially calculated the loss to United States trade through the Ottawa decisions as reaching \$300 millions or £60 millions (or something like £90 millions sterling at the present exchange), a sufficiently high figure and considerably exceeding the debt interest.

**T**HE Debts question consequently developed against this background of already deepening antagonism. The first three stages, revealed in the Far Eastern crisis, through Lausanne and through Ottawa, represented primarily an active British offensive against the United States. The only direct counter-blow of the United States during this period was the Hoover Disarmament Plan, calculated to expose the militarism of Britain and France who must inevitably reject it. But with the fourth stage, over the debts question and the refusal to consider any postponement, we get the

American counter-offensive. The close connection of these questions in the American view had already been repeatedly expressed. The inter-relation of debts and armaments recurs in every American Note and official statement. The inter-relation of debts and the Far Eastern crisis had been expressed in the semi-official New York *Times* last August in an article which noted the "wide difference" of view between Britain and the United States over Manchuria, and went on to refer to the unhappy coincidence of the impending debt negotiations, when England "will be seeking debt concessions from the United States" while it "may be thwarting the American policy at Geneva" (New York *Times*, August 16, 1932).

**L**ET us now turn to examine a little more closely the debts controversy. The present stage of the debts question reveals in a very sharp and obvious form the breakdown of capitalist stabilisation, of the partial stabilisation or restoration of the past decade, which was based for one of its main pillars on the export of American capital covering up the actual European adverse balance of payments. The British Note of December 1 correctly states (we add italics to its most revealing admission):

The annuities provided for in most of these agreements (Dawes Plan and debt settlements) were low during the earlier years, and their payment was rendered possible by the flow of investment capital from the United States of America to Continental Europe which was then taking place. *But the prosperity of the period from 1923 to 1929 was to a large extent illusory, and the seeds of future trouble had already been sown.*

It is no doubt gratifying that in 1932, well after the event, a British Government document should at last recognise the rotten or "illusory" character of the capitalist stabilisation of 1923-29. But it is permissible to point out that at the time, during the period 1923-29, all the official expressions, all the capitalist experts, economists, bankers and politicians, and all the social democratic and Labour wiseacres, were rubbing their hands over the triumph of stabilisation, of the restoration of capitalism, of the new long lease of life of capitalism, and pointing with scorn to the utter confounding of Communist

illusions. It is further permissible to point out that the Communists alone *at the time*, at the outset, at the time of the Dawes Plan and the return to the gold standard, and not on the basis of wisdom after the event, correctly analysed the “illusory” character of the restoration and correctly indicated wherein its future breakdown was already clearly visible, wherein “the seeds of future trouble had already been sown.”

**I**N the LABOUR MONTHLY for March, 1925 (Notes on “The Gold Standard”), we wrote :

What is the whole restoration of Europe? The restoration of Europe is admittedly based on the flow of American gold and credits to Europe. By this means capitalism seeks to overcome the consequences of its own concentration, which was leading to the logical capitalist conclusion of suffocation in one part and starvation in the rest. But does it overcome it? Not at all. For, by the very nature of capitalism, America can only send the gold as loans to be repaid with interest. The only salvation for capitalism would be an actual redistribution of gold and holdings of wealth; which would at any rate enable the game of beggar-my-neighbour to begin afresh. (The more progressive bourgeois economists, such as Keynes, advocate a complete cancellation of debts and reparations; but this is only a part of the tie-up.) But such a redistribution is impossible without destroying the whole property basis of capitalism. The juridical forms are at war with the existing development of production. Only the revolution can cut the knot. The restoration is an illusory restoration, because it is based on the increased indebtedness of Europe, which is precisely the problem that gave rise to its need.

And again :

But what does this mean? It means that in fact no solution has been reached. For what is the automatic result of the flow of American capital for investment abroad? The automatic result is that there must immediately begin a heavy return flow of interest to America. Only so long as the new American capital put out for investment exceeds the ever-increasing volume of interest on capital invested (a process to which there is an obvious limit), only so long does the situation continue on which is based the return to the gold standard. As soon as the point is reached at which the interest and payments exceed the new investment, the gold standard must crash and with it the whole restoration. This is a simple mathematical necessity.

This process we have now lived through, and the new attempt of capitalism is on the basis of the simple elimination of debts and reparations to try to find the solution of a problem, the roots of which go far deeper.

**N**EW illusions succeed to the old ones. The British Note in the passage already quoted continues :

*In the summer of 1929 the storm that was brewing was not yet visible, and it was hoped that conditions were sufficiently stabilised for a final settlement of reparations in the form of the Young Plan.*

What a confession of bankruptcy ! To whom was the approaching storm still invisible even in the summer of 1929 ? To all the capitalist governments, experts, economists, theorists and practical men, who haggled like peddlers over every sixpence of what was to be paid in 1988 through the elaborate schedules of the Young Plan (the Labour Government and Snowden winning their jingo laurels in this Bedlam), only to find that "unhappily, almost before the ink had dried on the agreements embodying the Young Plan, the storm had burst upon the world." But once again let it be noted. In the summer of 1929, at the same time as the Hague Conference of all the combined forces of capitalism was performing its Bedlam, at the same time the Tenth Plenum of the Communist International, that is to say, the serious leadership of mankind, was exactly indicating and analysing the approaching world crisis which would begin in a financial crash in America and spread throughout the world.

**A**ND now, after three-and-a-quarter years of the world crisis what have the rulers and experts of capitalism learnt ? Have they learnt to understand the elements of the causes of the crisis in capitalism, that technical progress is bursting the fetters of private property ownership, and that every attempted solution within the conditions of capitalist class monopoly will inevitably break upon that rock ? Of course not. They have just begun, thirteen years late, to discover that the whole system of war debts and reparations must be swept away, and to try to find

here the grand cause and solution of the crisis. The British Note declares :

The causes of the depression may be manifold, but it has been generally recognised that War debts and reparations have been one of the major causes, and that a settlement of these debts which will relieve the world of anxieties under this head is an indispensable condition of a revival of general prosperity.

Illusions once again, and very stale illusions. The crisis has long since of its own force thrust these issues into the background, and forced forward into view very much more fundamental problems. If the solution of the crisis were so simple, the Hoover moratorium would have long brought revival. As the *Economist* had mournfully to register, after a year of the Hoover moratorium :

A year ago it was possible to believe—as Mr. Hoover and many statesmen and bankers believed—that the lifting of the burden of reparations and war-debts would be such a relief to the world that it would turn the tide of depression. That belief is no longer possible ; it is abundantly clear that action on a much wider scale is necessary (14 May, 1932).

**B**UT even within this restricted sphere of debts and reparations, and of the effort at their elimination, a host of dilemmas appear. The platonic principle of the desirability of their elimination will receive wide applause. But as soon as the attempt is made to put this into practice, the problem appears : Who is to pay ? Not in the sense of the ultimate payer ; the ultimate payer remains the working class, even after they have been nominally “cancelled” (*i.e.*, transferred to the internal budgets of the respective countries). But in the sense of the immediate payer, as between the rival imperialist gangs. Britain for twelve years has voiced the plan of all-round cancellation as the only fair, just, humane and statesmanlike plan. The Balfour Note ten years ago put this formula down on paper. But the formula has up to the present remained on paper, and the Balfour Note has remained a piece of propaganda, for very obvious reasons. On the face of it, it might look a very fair proposal of give-and-take. But in fact it meant that America would lose the

most. Britain would partly lose, in respect of the debts owed to it, and partly gain, in respect of the debts it owed. In practice what Britain has been able to collect on its debts has never equalled, even with reparations, what it has had to pay ; and in consequence all-round cancellation would mean a net gain. The United States, on the other hand, which only had debts owing to it and itself owed nothing, would only lose all round by cancellation and gain nothing. Thus the viewpoints of the United States and Britain on the question have remained in diametrical opposition ; and the duel has gone on in one form or another for the past twelve years.

**T**HE American viewpoint on the Balfour Note has been expressed by the well-known spokesman of American foreign policy, Frank H. Simonds, as follows :

The Balfour doctrine was enunciated for the express purpose of setting up a contrast between British generosity and American Shylockery. The British announced that, unlike the United States, they would never think of collecting money from their Allies, or even their poverty-stricken enemy, simply for themselves. They would only take enough to satisfy the exigent creditor across the ocean. This little gesture made Britain popular and America still more unpopular in Europe, but to us it seemed "a bit thick." On the surface the proposal, which the British still keep presenting as the height of statesmanship and humanity, was engaging. But what it actually amounted to was an invitation to us to hold the bag. Britain had lent money, and borrowed money, and while she had lent more than she had borrowed, her chances of recovery were not of the best. If she could come out even, she would do well. But we had borrowed nothing in the way of money from any one. We owed no one. Cancellation for us was one-sided—we gave up everything, no one forgave us any debt.

American imperialism, being no more philanthropic than any other imperialism, resisted the transparent blandishments of the Balfour Note, and preferred to stick to its bonds and pocket the Shylock insults. The Balfour Note served a valuable propagandist purpose for Britain ; but it never had any bearing on practical policy (as the British debt-funding delegation to Washington speedily found—hence all the

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subsequent tears, revelations and recriminations between the British politicians concerned).

ON the other hand, if Britain's interest lay in all-round cancellation and not in paying, why should Britain have funded the debt and paid through the nose to a net loss of £200 millions? Here we come to the other horn of the dilemma on which British policy has found itself impaled on this issue. This question of the debt-settlement and subsequent payments has remained insoluble to the organs of the boulevard press, who have only been able to explain it through the innate weakness of character of Stanley Baldwin, since it is not possible to argue that he was a traitor or in foreign pay. The more respectable organs have, until the recent crisis tore down all reserves and pretences, seen in it a demonstration of the innate uprightness, probity and quixotic nobility of the English character. The practical explanation is more simple. For in fact Britain's interests were not in all-round cancellation of debts, but only of war-debts. Britain's interests as world-creditor enormously exceed its particular embarrassments as debtor. Britain still remained and remains the largest world creditor. And therefore, if it comes to an issue, Britain must necessarily come out on the side of the usurers, even though at the moment the debtor's shoe pinches. British finance, struggling to re-establish itself after the war, could not risk a break with American finance, more especially in the situation when the debt settlement was made (with the Ruhr invasion, and the necessity of securing American co-operation to exert pressure on France). As Baldwin accordingly declared with pride in his address to the British Bankers' Association in May, 1929 :

If we had postponed indefinitely, either paying the £60 millions, or repudiating in the hope of getting a better bargain, we should never have restored the credit of the City of London to where it stands to-day.

This was, however, spoken in 1929, before the crisis had broken out and the pound collapsed.

**T**O-DAY the issue of Default has become practical politics in Britain. There could be no more striking demonstration of the extremity of the crisis. Cabinet Ministers, Treasury experts, City magnates, and financial journals like the *Economist*, have openly advocated Repudiation on the Russian model. For a feverish moment British Capitalism turned into a Hamlet of uncertainty: "To Pay or Not to Pay." In the last resort the British Government has decided for Delayed Default—payment of just one more instalment, with a proviso (not accepted by the creditor) that this is not to be regarded as a payment of interest, but as on account of a final capital payment, after which no further instalment will be paid. In this way it has successfully secured the worst of both worlds, since it has both paid and defaulted.

**B**UT the discussion that has accompanied the payment has in the hour of trial stripped aside all the sentimental talk of principle and integrity, and laid bare the simple calculations of the usurer. Thus the *Times* editorial:

It goes almost (*sic*) without saying, so far as Great Britain is concerned, that this obligation will be punctually discharged. Any other course would deal a fatal blow to the quaking edifice of international credit. If Great Britain of all countries were to repudiate her obligations, she would set an example which would be eagerly followed by every debtor country throughout the world—possibly even by private debtors—with incalculable results on international finance and international trade. (24 November, 1932).

Just there is the hitch. "Would be eagerly followed by every debtor country throughout the world." "Possibly even by private debtors." In vain the British Note strives to establish the basically different character of the war-debts—"expenditure on destruction," "unnatural transfers"—from those beautiful and admirable "productive loans" which, it declares, breaking into poetry, "have converted whole territories from desolate swamps or uninhabited plains to flourishing provinces teeming with human life." Unfortunately, the distinction does not hold. What proportion of British overseas loans, the sanctity of whose interest it is thus sought to maintain,

has been spent on armaments and "destruction"? What proportion of the load of debt under which India is crushed does not represent past wars, wars engaged for the purposes of British conquest, and often outside India? What of the loans to a Khedive to squander, serving to give the title-deeds to Egypt? Does the bondholder the less demand his interest, or the British warships and the whole apparatus of governmental coercion the less enforce its payment? The principle of Debt is the principle of Capitalism. The title-deeds of capitalism, the more they are looked into, the more they will be found bloody and unsavoury in their origin. The whole fabric, the whole "quaking edifice," holds together. Even in extremity the British usurer trembles at the thought of Repudiation.

**B**RITISH capitalism in consequence still looks to American capitalism for an agreed settlement rather than face repudiation. Herein lies the power of American capitalism to drive its bargain, and it has made abundantly clear that it is out to drive a hard one. Nevertheless, a settlement may be reached, though it is more likely to take the form of revision than of simple cancellation. For there are strong interests of American finance-capital in such a revision, or even possible cancellation. The present value of the war debts to America are calculated as representing 6.4 thousand million dollars. But the total of American world investments amounts to 15 thousand million dollars, and of American investments in Europe to 5 thousand millions. In order to ensure payment on these private investments in the present difficult conditions, it may be necessary to forego the payment on the war debts. For, from the point of view of the leading finance-capitalists, or Wall Street, the private debts come before the public; since the public can always be transferred to the American budget, that is, to the American taxpayer; but the private must be collected or are lost. For the same reason, from the point of view of the American small capitalist or farmer (or so-called Middle-West, whose ignorance and backwardness the European press loves to scoff at), the

public debts come before the private ; since they are determined not to shoulder the burden of the war debts in order to save the private foreign loans of the big financiers. Hence the inner conflict within American policy, and the apparent greater closeness of American high finance and governmental circles to the European outlook. Just as the private interests of the big financial houses in their German holdings played an important part in compelling the ending of reparations, so the interests of Wall Street may compel the cancellation or substantial revision of the war debts. But American policy will certainly exert itself to drive the hardest possible bargain, as the hints held out in the Hoover statements of possible "other forms of tangible compensation" have already indicated.

**E**VEN full cancellation of the war debts, however—and therefore all the more, revision—will not mean the solution or removal of the problems associated with the debts, but only the change of their form. For "cancellation," as spoken of by the capitalist statesmen and economists, does not mean cancellation ; it means removal to the internal budgets ; the full burden continues ; the interest on all the "expenditure on destruction" has still to be raised by generations that never knew the war, so long as capitalism lasts, and until the proletarian revolution alone brings true cancellation. Nor is even the problem of transfer solved. The payments on the public reparations and debts are replaced by the payments on the private loans and share-holdings. Take, for example, the key question, the position of Germany, after the ending of reparations. The total volume of foreign investments in Germany, according to a recent official estimate (*Economist*, September 13, 1932) amounted in February, 1932, to no less than 26 milliard marks or £1,300 millions. The interest and other charges on this produce a total of 1.7 milliard marks or £85 millions requiring annually to be paid abroad by Germany. It will be seen that this figure comes very close to the Young Plan figure. Precisely the same problem of transfer, which can only be achieved by

forcing up an enormous excess of exports, recurs as with the Young Plan. And this, after the complete nominal wiping out of reparations. It will be seen that the tie-up of international capitalist relations has gone far beyond the simple isolated issue of war debts and reparations, within which the capitalist statesmen seek to confine it. The significance of these questions is only as symptoms of the growing imperialist conflicts and antagonisms to which the crisis is driving, and which will inevitably reach still greater heights in 1933.

R. P. D.

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# THE MANŒUVRES OF THE T.U.C.

By HARRY POLLITT

**T**HE New Year opens with a spate of speeches, articles, and resolutions from reformist trade union leaders, that breathe a great show of resistance to the attacks on the employed and unemployed workers.

What has happened? Have the fruits of Mondism, lower wages, speeding-up, increased unemployment, increased accidents, come home to roost with such force that there has been some change in the fundamental policy of the reformist leaders?

Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no change in the policy of class collaboration; there is a change in the character of the public declarations, in order to cover up the same old policy of helping the capitalists to solve the economic crisis at the expense of the working class.

## *Why these Manœuvres?*

The reformists are learning from all the recent economic struggles just as the workers are learning. It has long been plain to all that the strikes that have taken place since 1928 have been against the whole line of the reformist leaders. But in the strikes of 1932 something new has been appearing and it is this that the reformists have noted, and now manœuvre to destroy. That is, the workers have begun to forge their own forms of leadership and organisation, independent of the trade union leaders.

It is this first beginning, in the building up of authoritative independent leadership and organisation of economic struggles, that is so vital for the whole future line of the fight against the employers' offensive, and is so dangerous for the reformist leaders that it is responsible for the new tone in their speeches, articles, and resolutions.

In spite of all weaknesses, the strikes of the London Dockers, Lightermen, Miners and Cotton workers, the fights of the London Busmen and the preparations now being made by the Railwaymen's Vigilance Movement, all have shown an initiative, a growing revolt of the union branches against the Head Office line and policy, attempts to unite the activity in the factory with the work in the branch, new ideas, new forms of mass action as in the mass picketing in Lancashire, that give the guarantee that, providing the revolutionary workers seize the opportunities that

now lie to hand, a firm basis can be built up, that ensures the successful leadership by the workers themselves of all the strike movements in the future.

It is true that in all these strikes, the workers have not been able to prevent their leaders calling off strikes on terms that have meant worsened conditions and lower wages ; they have not been able to prevent strike-breaking, they have not been able to bring up rapidly the reinforcements and widen the strike areas so as to achieve victory for the workers. But they have shown the way forward, they have exposed as never before the reformist leaders, and they have laid the basis for the swift development of a great mass movement in the factories, and trade unions, that points the way forward to unity.

It is this new phase of the employed workers' fight, together with the mighty movement of the unemployed, as seen in the street battles in Belfast and Birkenhead and in the support given to the National Hunger March, that have acted as the warning signal to the trade union leaders.

Now as the offensive against the workers gathers in intensity, as revolutionary consciousness deepens, as new sections of workers actively participate in the class struggle, these leaders again attempt to retain and strengthen their hold upon the workers, by this shameless demagoguery, their platform trickery and cunning, while they do not take *one practical step to give living effect to their words*.

It is therefore necessary to sound a sharp note of warning, so that these "left" manœuvres may not only be exposed, but as a result, the workers' independent fight may be strengthened. It is timely to remind workers of the similarity of some of the speeches being made now with those that were made in the nine months prior to the General Strike in 1926.

Every worker knows only too well what the betrayal of that historic strike has meant in the factories and in the homes. We have to see that such a thing never happens again, for in the present period of daily sharpening economic crisis, a repetition of such betrayals means losses ten times more serious than those which followed 1926.

The recent Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party had before it a wealth of rich experiences on the lessons of recent economic and unemployed struggles, and in particular the part played by the reformist union leaders. In summing up these experiences, the Congress resolution on this point on the Agenda, states :

As the mass struggle advances, and the forms of independent organisation and leadership grow in strength, the trade union leaders, even while they hinder in every way the day to day struggle of the workers, will make increasing "Left" manœuvres in order to maintain their influence and power. (Resolution 12th Party Congress : Lessons of Economic Struggles.)

Is this formulation a "Communist distortion," as is so often alleged? Or is it not being proved true with every day that passes? A number of practical examples will prove this point. Let us take Mr. Bevin, the "Dockers' K.C." He is reputed to be the driving force and leader of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress. These extracts from his speeches at three initial stages of the working class struggle, will sharply reveal the move, stage by stage, from open and fulsome adulation of the employers, to a hinting of resistance to wage attacks and then, after the experiences of the Dockers, and particularly the Busmen to the full stage thunder and declamation of having reached "the bitter end."

*The Leaders' Words—*

When the battle was raging on the question of the Mond-Turner Conferences, this was Mr. Bevin's line:

Mr. Bevin at Swansea—

The members of the T.U.C. were now engaged in discussions with a representative group of employers on a wide range of problems. They were asked, "How can you go into conference with people who tried to beat you in 1926, people who have fought you?"

His answer was that he regarded the change of attitude of these people as an indication that Labour had won the first round. (*Daily Herald*, April 30, 1928.)

The workers know only too well what they have lost in wage cuts, how unemployment has increased, &c., since this "change of attitude" on the part of the employers.

When in 1931, the employers were attacking the South Wales miners and the Lancashire weavers, and threats were being made against the Dockers, this was Mr. Bevin's line:

The first big union that can, if its members' wages are attacked, resist that attack successfully, can turn the wages situation in this country and right throughout Europe. (*Daily Herald*, April 20, 1931.)

That speech was used to create the impression that if any members of Mr. Bevin's Union were attacked, he would fight, that he would "turn the wages situation in this country." It did create that impression. But it did not prevent him accepting a wage cut for the Dockers later in the year, without even troubling to take a ballot vote, and when 4,000 London dockers came out unofficially against this cut, calling it a Communist attempt to disrupt the Union.

And now, with the lessons of the Lancashire strikes, and above all, the tousing that he has had from the London Busmen, he comes out in full song at Grimsby to this effect:

The same attack on wages that started one and a half years ago has started again. The employers have made a demand on the railwaymen. If the National Wages Board gives a reduction, and if by any chance it is accepted, then we shall be the next.

The Executive has decided on this occasion that whether we win or lose, we are going to accept the challenge, and fight it out to the bitter end. (*Daily Herald*, October 8, 1932.)

Now we do not rule out the possibility of Mr. Bevin leading a big strike in order to retain his influence and power with the members of his union, but that strike will never be led to victory by Mr. Bevin, for his whole political line is that of reformism, however much he attempts to disguise it.

One simple test of how far such leaders are sincere in their demagoguery would surely be their active participation and preparation day in and day out now for a successful railwaymen's strike. For if there is one body of workers who exercise tremendous power, it is the railwaymen. A railway strike would strike a mighty blow at the whole character of the employers' offensive. Taking place in the present situation facing British capitalism, it could force the Companies to withdraw their demands. It would "turn the wages situation in this country and right throughout Europe."

#### —*And Their Actions.*

But where are these steps? What solidarity meetings are the General Council organising? What leaflets are they issuing to the workers urging support for the railwaymen? What working class conferences are they organising to build up support? Stern facts (the facts that are so beloved by Mr. Citrine) show that not a finger is being lifted by any of the General Council leaders, although their speeches are in tune with Mr. Bevin.

On the contrary, when a suggestion was made of a working agreement between Mr. Bevin's union and the railwaymen's union, it was indignantly denied by the former. Later, when another statement appeared that the Transport Workers' Union had made a working arrangement with three big unions in the distributive trades, Mr. Bevin described it as follows:

It is too funny for words. There is nothing in it, so far as our Union is concerned it has never been considered. (*Daily Herald*, December 12, 1932.)

There you have the whole bag of tricks exposed. One minute, "a fight to the bitter end"; the next, when a suggestion has been made that consolidation of the workers' power has been effected, it becomes "too funny for words."

Take a further example, which is even more revealing as showing the character of the manœuvres the trade union leaders will make. The National Union of Seamen is notorious on all the seven seas. Wherever trade unionists gather, whatever their calling, and the N.U.S. is mentioned, the description is always the same : " the Ship-owners' Union."

In December, a Conference of the International Transport Workers' Federation was held in Amsterdam. It was presided over by Mr. Bevin and attended by a delegation from the National Union of Seamen, headed by the General Secretary, Mr. Spence. The *Daily Herald* of December 5 informs us the following resolution was unanimously adopted :

The economic struggles going on between the capitalist countries are causing untold suffering and widespread unemployment, and are leading to attack after attack on the standard of living. Reductions of wages already imposed have proved futile, and have made conditions of trade worse. Attacks on conditions, such as the manning of ships, in certain countries, are, in addition to worsening conditions of labour, endangering safety at sea.

It was imperative, therefore, that further reductions should be resisted by all possible means.

In the early part of 1932 the N.U.S. recommended a heavy wage cut, again without taking a ballot vote. Now, resistance is to be the order of the day !

#### *Dividing the Unemployed*

And so one could go on, giving example after example. But one other will suffice. It is one relating to the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and its proposal to organise demonstrations of the unemployed in the New Year.

We have not space to go into the foul record of the General Council regarding its treatment of the unemployed, how it sponsored the Anomalies Bill, how it tries to split the ranks of the unemployed by asking Trades Councils to form Local Unemployed Associations in opposition to the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, but it makes a disgusting story in the light of their present proposals.

Sufficient to recall that last September at their Congress in Newcastle, they not only refused, on the direct initiative of Mr. Citrine, the Secretary of the General Council, to receive a deputation of the Unemployed, they caused their Congress Hall to be so surrounded by police, to protect them from the unemployed, that one of the Congress delegates was compelled to protest as follows :

The display of force outside this Congress Hall to-day is a disgrace to the whole Trade Union Movement. We have had these displays before—especially at Swansea.

It is not a credit to the Trade Union Movement to see the number of police and " cossacks " parading the streets outside. (F. Rowlands, House and Ship Painters, Newcastle T.U.C., 1932.)

Later, when the National Hunger March was being organised, and while it was winding its triumphant way to London, the Council warned local Trades Councils to boycott the March, and every mean despicable action possible was done to try and place obstacles and difficulties in the way of the Marchers.

Yet the March roused the whole country. It evoked the mightiest response ever seen in London.

The General Council have noted this. They are going to organise great unemployed demonstrations in all the principal towns, and for a central demonstration, delegations of the unemployed are to be brought in charabancs to London, in order to get the right Cup Final atmosphere.

Then the same Council that refused the Unemployed at Newcastle the right to set out their case, are to pray for the right of a petition to be presented at the Bar of the House of Commons, setting out the case of the unemployed.

It is said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and surely these copy-book methods of the General Council are the best indications that the fights of the unemployed, the Hunger March led by the N.U.W.M., have not only received mass support and approval, but have forced the General Council to make their "left" moves in order to attempt to retain their influence and hold in the working class movement. Thus does reformist life and practice confirm the analysis of the Communist Congress.

#### *What Must be Done*

What does it all mean for the workers? It means that the issues which are being taken up by the reformist leaders, resistance to wage cuts, fight against unemployment, must be taken up with redoubled force and energy by the militant workers, and the way paved for the rapid forging of the workers' own independent leadership.

When the reformist leaders speak about resistance to wage cuts and fighting against unemployment, it means that in the factories, the trade union branches, and in the Labour Exchanges and localities, there is tremendous unrest and discontent, there is growing revolt, there are the beginnings of mass movements.

To divert all this into safe legal channels, to disorganise the fight, to keep the workers divided, to surrender the everyday interests of the workers, to help the capitalists solve the crisis at the workers' expense, this is the aim and intention. But it is covered by skilful phrases, by cunning resolutions. By creating the impression "Well, the leaders are going to fight this time," or "at last they've woken up."

Therefore the militant workers, while advancing every issue that comes up in the struggle, by making the most simple and practical proposals of organising and winning the fight, have at the same time to expose mercilessly the manœuvres of the reformist leaders. Not by general phrases, but in a reasoned way, by contrasting speeches with performances, and taking practical steps to build up the movement for independent leadership. For example, amongst the railwaymen, calling Shop and Depot meetings, rallying every member to the Union Branch meetings, organising militant groups that have the support of the Branches in all the Shops, Sheds and Depots, sending delegates to the Railwaymen's Vigilance Movement, getting Branches to elect delegates to this rank-and-file movement, bringing Clerks, Drivers, Firemen, Porters, Cleaners, Signalmen, Platelayers, &c., all together, raising the problems of strike organisation and leadership, winning the support of local Trades Councils and Trade Union Branches, explaining the actual meaning of the Companies' demands, the profits of the Companies, the past wage-cuts; explaining the experiences and lessons of the Lancashire weavers and spinners' strikes, how their leaders made brave speeches, but executed treacherous deeds, how those strikes could have been won if the strikers had taken the leadership into their own hands, and formed their own strike committees and strike organisations, relating these experiences to what has happened to the railwaymen in the past; how the Cramps, Bromleys and Walkdens have made brave speeches last year, and then signed for wage-cuts, showing how even now when the critical hours of strike preparations are running out, the leaders are taking no practical steps to organise strike action, to organise general working class solidarity, the organisation of financial support, the building of a common understanding with the Road Transport workers, both traffic and passenger, for no blacklegging, &c., &c.

#### *A Militant Independent Leadership*

In this practical and concrete way can the "left" manœuvres of the reformist leaders be unmasked, their influence destroyed, the movement purged from their disorganising and treacherous policy. And the mass energy and initiative, the genuine and honest rank-and-file workers brought forward into the revolutionary leadership of the daily struggle in the factories and in the unions—that alone can give the guarantee for the successful leadership and organisation of the whole workers' fight; that alone lays the firm basis in every industry and union for the development of broad unofficial movements which will be brought together in a common mass movement uniting and co-ordinating the whole struggle under a common leadership of the workers themselves, freed from the present corrupting influence of the reformist leaders, which could take on the form of a mighty Trade Union Militant League, opening up new

paths and victories for the organised and unorganised workers of Britain. And to any worker who is sceptical about whether such a line and policy can be carried out, we will give a concrete example.

The experiences of the London Busmen's Rank-and-File Movement should be carefully studied by the militant workers in every industry. The determination of the mass of London busmen (shown in a 4 to 1 majority ballot vote to resist the Company's terms) was expressed through the setting up of a Rank-and-File Committee, consisting of branch representatives who reported back to the branches and secured confirmation of the Committee's decisions. Funds to carry out a propaganda campaign were raised through the branches; leaflets, pamphlets, and the *Busman's Punch* were sold through the branches; speakers from the Rank-and-File Committee addressed the branches; a most successful series of mass meetings and demonstrations were carried through. Nor was the question of solidarity lost sight of. Leaflets for tramwaymen and Underground workers were distributed, and all trade unionists were invited to the mass meetings; there was even a special leaflet explaining the busmen's case to passengers, which had a very good effect. And all of this work was carried out by a committee drawing its authority from the garages and branches, who looked to it to lead the fight against the Company *independently of the Trade Union officials*, but *with the full force of the Trade Union branches and garages behind it*.

The situation is ripe in every industry and union for the development of similar movements of the rank-and-file. In this way alone can the workers build up their own leadership and organisation that can defend their everyday interests, successfully win strikes, and establish a mass authoritative revolutionary trade union opposition.

# I.L.P. 'REVOLUTIONARY POLICY'—DISCUSSION

## I.—The Present Position of the I.L.P.

*By* JACK GASTER

**T**HE discussion in the columns of the *LABOUR MONTHLY* on the future of the I.L.P., when not marred by deliberate misrepresentation or third-rate invective, has been of extraordinary interest to members of the I.L.P. To other comrades, however, the apparent differences in each contribution from members of the I.L.P. must be even more interesting. It must be made clear, therefore, at the outset, that this article is expressing an individual point of view, and although that point of view may be shared by an ever-increasing number within the Party, it would be a distortion of the facts to suggest that it is expressing the policy of the Party as a whole.

The development of the I.L.P. has been one of apparent contradictions based upon the old English principle of muddling through, but that viewpoint, even if it were completely true, which it is not, does not of itself mean that the present membership of the I.L.P. is content to muddle through any longer. It may be suggested that the I.L.P. has, in fact, been more closely related to the minds of the workers of this country than any other Party, and it is because it has been based on and directed by rank-and-file workers in the majority of cases that the I.L.P. has been more responsive to changes in outlook. Much is made of the fact that the I.L.P. at its formation was non-Marxist. Palme Dutt and other writers have emphasised the opportunist outlook of the former leaders of the I.L.P., but none of them will even consider the possible truth that changes in the mentality of both the leadership and the rank-and-file are due not to wicked manœuvring or deliberate deception of the workers but to the gradual awakening to and developing sense of the real meaning of Socialism and the changes in outlook and tactic that such understanding necessarily entails. Most of the members of the I.L.P. who have of recent months seen the fallacy of their previous policy, including some of those who have now joined the Communist Party, were steeped in the muddled theories of reformism, and yet neither the Communist Party, nor its associated organisations, will admit that sincerity is not the attribute only of members of the Communist Party but is also to be found in those other comrades, whether leaders or rank-and-file, who have striven for years in the I.L.P. and all other sections of the working class movement to do what they considered to be the most useful service in the ranks of the working class.

Imperialist war and the difficulties which have been facing the capitalist class have turned many I.L.P.'ers to a more serious and deep examination of their attitude than ever before, and they say now, honestly, that in this new view of the situation their past activity has been on wrong lines, and they are seeking the correct policy and consequent tactic through which they can most usefully take their part in the struggle for workers' power. The fight that has taken place in the I.L.P. ranging round the question of disaffiliation from the Labour Party has, in some quarters, been wildly distorted into a fight simply for freedom of speech in Parliament. This dispute was the natural consequence of the awakening of the I.L.P. to the necessity for the abandonment of its previous reformist outlook and its demand for something, at the time not clearly defined, which could more reasonably express its determination to overthrow the capitalist state. At Bradford it was clear to everybody, except the correspondent of the *Daily Worker*, that the issue was being fought on policy, and it was on that ground that the I.L.P. broke with the Labour Party. It is easy for comrades to say, "If that were the case why were the amendments initiated by the Revolutionary Policy Committee rejected so overwhelmingly by Conference?" Those inside the Party know perfectly well that the rejection was due to the fact that the N.A.C. put forward a new draft constitution which the Branches had not had adequate opportunity of considering, so that it was impossible to get across at Bradford much more than the need for disaffiliation, and it will, of course, rest with the Party to remedy the defects at the earliest opportunity.

Members who have examined the new constitution in relation to their changed outlook cannot help but agree that the criticism offered both by E. F. Wise and Palme Dutt, that it is really very little different from the old constitution dressed up in new words, is well-founded. But no member of the I.L.P. is satisfied with the present state of affairs, and again, the confusion that now exists does not mean either deliberate manœuvring or unwillingness to move in the right direction. The I.L.P. is to-day in a state of flux and it is just because it is in that state that many who consider themselves revolutionary Socialists have retained their membership of and activity within the Party in the hope that it may become a real revolutionary socialist Party, which will not be open to the objections which membership of the Communist Party appears to present. It is, therefore, the task of I.L.P. members to discuss more what they think the constitution of the Party should be and for which they still work, than the existing muddle.

Is the I.L.P. or is it not to be a Marxist organisation? As one who has not been a profound student of Marx in the past, I write with all due humility in the columns of a paper in which some of the contributors, to my mind, seem to have done nothing else but bury their noses between

the covers of the works of Marx and Lenin. If being a Marxist organisation implies the general acceptance of his interpretations of history, analysis of capitalism and its necessary consequences for the workers, then obviously the I.L.P. must be a Marxist organisation. If to be a Leninist means the complete acceptance of Lenin's analysis of Marxism and his tactics as the "last word," then the I.L.P. cannot be a Leninist body in the strict sense of the term, but to understand the lessons that Lenin taught is essential. It is obvious that, as the struggle for power develops, there will be no room for two revolutionary parties, each claiming the leadership of the workers, and we are not over-concerned as to whether eventually that Party is the I.L.P. or the Communist Party so long as it appears to offer a correct leadership based on sound theory and tactic.

The I.L.P. declared at Bradford for "first workers' power—then a socialist plan." That is correct, but that does not mean that the development of the organisation which will make that socialist plan achievable must wait completely until after workers' power has been attained. The I.L.P. must, therefore, while constantly keeping before it its ultimate objective, even though that may be a purely idealist objective, assist in all forms in the development of that class struggle that alone can lead to the overthrow of the Capitalist State—the barrier to Socialism. In the past the I.L.P. has appealed to the workers to use the governmental machinery of capitalism to effect control. It was even suggested that if such control were obtained, a peaceful dispossession of the capitalist class could be effected. We now recognise that that was an idle dream. Even assuming that such control were achieved, which we do not think possible, it is inconceivable that the possessing class would quietly yield up their possessions. The workers must look therefore, to one thing, and one thing only, and that is their own class strength, to be used in a revolutionary seizure of power. This implies that the condition precedent to successful capture of power is the awakening of the workers to the futility of all methods other than the revolutionary method. That awakening is not yet here and it is sheer self-deception to pretend that the workers are straining at the leash. The I.L.P. must, therefore, devote itself to the development of that consciousness by agitation in season and out of season, seeking to arouse the worker, in the course of the daily struggle against capitalism, to the futility of all other methods if he is to satisfy his needs, and to press home to him that those needs must be satisfied irrespective of the needs of capitalist economy. There can, therefore, be no room for pacifist sentimentality within the I.L.P. The I.L.P. must, however, do all in its power to build up a *united* militant working class movement, and it is important to note that the policy and tactics involved in united front activity is as vital a subject of discussion within the I.L.P. as it is within the Communist Party.

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So far as the International working class movement is concerned, it is fairly obvious that the Second International is now no more useful to the working class than it was in 1914 and that it would be a serious mistake if a new International were formed. Those comrades who say there is no theoretical middle path between the Second and Third Internationals are right, but, unfortunately, the rules of the Third International make it impossible for two sections in any one country to be affiliated to it. Why, then, if it is felt that the I.L.P. should join the Third International, is it considered impossible to ask I.L.P.'ers to join the C.P.G.B. ? This is not due to a sentimental desire to maintain the I.L.P. as a party simply because it is the I.L.P. No Party that is not serving the best interests of the working class has the right to exist, but the Communist Party appears to offer many objections.

It calls itself the Party of Marx and Lenin, but, quite frankly, must not a revolutionary Party be a Party of convinced revolutionary socialists who can form the spearhead of the wider working class movement and not consist largely of people who are vaguely militant and desirous of smashing the Capitalist system, who have acquired a parrot-like knowledge of some phrases of Marx and Lenin, and who interpret the very necessary discipline which a revolutionary party must exert upon its members, as a blind faith in its leadership ? One of the results of the confusion as to whether or not the C.P.G.B. should be a mass Party makes it appear to some I.L.P.'ers as largely a party of jargon and phrases with a rank-and-file prepared to substitute blind faith in those phrases for a reasoned understanding. Blind faith whether in a mystical god-head, or dead economist, or working class leader is an impossible basis for reasoned action. As the religious "believer" swears that all else are heathen so now it appears as though the rank-and-file of the Communist Party is taught, believes and repeats on all possible occasions that the Communist Party is the Party of the Chosen People and all else are heathen. They go further and suggest that all who are not within the ranks of the Communist Party are consciously and deliberately traitors to the working class movement—bulwarks of the capitalist system—social-fascists. Frankly I cannot accept that. Most workers are just as sincere as any revolutionary socialist, although their acceptance of a wrong theory necessarily leads to faulty method and tactic, but the I.L.P. must not think that by personal abuse and invective these people will be persuaded that their leadership is wrong.

Then again, the Communist Party deliberately or otherwise—one is never quite sure—gives the impression through its publications and its speakers that capitalism is in the period of permanent crisis from which, by the mass action of the workers, the foundations of the Socialist Commonwealth will evolve, and that the workers are waiting for the

lead in order to achieve this desirable aim. It simply is not true. Nothing is inevitable. The I.L.P. will make a criminal error if it confuses a capitalist crisis with a revolutionary crisis. A revolutionary crisis is a period of capitalist crisis which includes a second essential condition and that is a class conscious working class. This has yet to be developed in the course of the daily struggle and this must be the purpose of the I.L.P. and any revolutionary Party. Constant criticism is levelled at the I.L.P. on the ground that it is preaching defeatism. If preaching defeatism is pressing home to the workers the futility of believing that need will be satisfied within the capitalist structure, and the consequent preaching of the necessity for the complete overthrow of capitalism, then the I.L.P. must continue to be defeatist, but that does not mean that the I.L.P. should endeavour to persuade the workers not to make demands upon capitalism. That must be done at all costs, for it is clear that every concession won, is one more nail in the coffin of capitalism, and it is only in the course of that fight that class consciousness can be developed.

Lastly comes the question of the united front. The I.L.P. must strive for that united front with all militant working class organisations, possibly building upon specific issues, but eventually developing into workers' councils, which would be an instrument for the capture of power and for the maintenance of that workers' dictatorship which the transition period would demand. The I.L.P., however, wants a real united front, not a sham one. It would be unreasonable to ask Parties to forego their principles, but no united front can be presented to the capitalist class if every occasion of the meeting of workers as a united front is to be a debate on their various differences and not an appeal for support on the points of unity. A united front must be developed by the active co-operation of all comrades in the Parties concerned, and only that co-operation will remove the bogey of insincerity that at present hampers real united activities.

The I.L.P., like the Communist Party, has made many mistakes, but the I.L.P. has honestly admitted these mistakes, and just because it does so, the rank-and-file of the Communist Party should be more able to appreciate that sincerity, rather than increase the virulence of their attacks on some individual I.L.P.'ers. If the Communist Party were to overcome its narrow sectarianism, its false approach, the jargon of its rank-and-file and the virulent misrepresentation by some of its leaders and its press of all who dare to differ, there might be no need for the I.L.P., but until that is done, there is room for the I.L.P. as a real revolutionary workers' Party, and it is in that spirit, expressed not merely in words but in all its activities, that the I.L.P. will, as some of us hope, prove itself to all militant socialists.

*[Several questions are raised in this article which will be dealt with in subsequent issues.—Editor, LABOUR MONTHLY].*

## II.—The Dilemma of I.L.P. Revolutionaries

By D. EDWARDS

**S**INCERE revolutionaries can be primarily concerned with but one question at this critical hour in the class-struggle—the unity of the working class, and the building of a really mass proletarian party in this country as a stage in achieving that unity.

Within the I.L.P. to-day there are very many workers, and some intellectuals, just as determined to obtain this unity as the Communists: the question, therefore, that they must decide is how this unification can take place. In approaching this question we shall pass over the official theories of the Brockways and Maxtons as being too superficial for those who have made any study of Marxian dialectics to take seriously.

The I.L.P. considered without relation to the militant rank-and-file workers who at all times have been found in its ranks, has for thirty years been a non-Marxist party. It stood aside at the time when the victorious Russian proletariat was shaking European capitalism to its foundations. At the moment when the European working class, under the leadership of the Third International might have overthrown capitalism (1919 and 1923) it actually prevented a section of the workers from joining the revolutionary camp. Now with such a record as this, the very same people who led during these vacillating periods, tell us that by means of a few resolutions this black record can be wiped out, and that “overnight” a “change of spots” has taken place!

It is the many vague theories within the “left wing” of the now “all-left” I.L.P. that demand serious attention. Here we can find much more earnestness, knowledge, commonsense and a good many just criticisms of the Communist Party. The R.P.C. which is, to a certain extent, carrying on an opposition to the N.A.C. (within constitutional limits) says in effect, “The I.L.P. is still not what we want it to be, it is still not a revolutionary party, the new constitution we admit is only the old dish served up with a little more revolutionary garnish, but we can and must change all that. Disaffiliation was only a stage in the performance of the task. We shall continue to fight for a real revolutionary policy, for mass action, and united front, until having captured the party machine, we can mould it into the real revolutionary apparatus we require.”

It certainly must be granted that through bringing many I.L.P.’ers into unconditional united fronts in the past year, the R.P.C. is on the

right road, that also the interest they have aroused in Marxism and Leninism is having great results—more far-reaching in fact than the comrades concerned anticipate. Indeed, it is because they do not yet see the dialectical process that is taking place, that they may land on the rocks.

Let us suppose it were possible to take the I.L.P. and “re-mould it nearer to the heart’s desire.” Such an operation we shall see would necessitate “shattering it to bits.” A Marxist knows that the revolutionary party of the proletariat is always revolutionary, through capitalist prosperity and depression. In the past, however, the I.L.P. has been reformist, pacifist, and therefore a capitalist-supporting party. Before it could really purify itself, therefore, the family skeletons would have to be taken out of the I.L.P. cupboard, and many of these skeletons would be found to be present “revolutionary” leaders. Their removal would mean that large bourgeois sections of the party, who have not taken the claim to be revolutionary seriously, would secede. All that would remain would be a small group.

This cleansing process having taken place, what of the small band of “pure in heart” remaining? A revolutionary party which is not international is not revolutionary in the Marxist sense. In Great Britain there would then be two revolutionary organisations both claiming the allegiance of the working class. Both certainly small—but one isolated, detached, purely British (Oh, such a British conception, this insistence for a “British” Communist Party), and the other linked up with a mighty international organisation, consisting of dozens of parties, in some countries larger than the Labour Party here. The revolutionary I.L.P. would then operate nationally, apparently until it could form a fourth International—a task of years—in spite of the fact that direct struggles for power are the immediate prospects.

It would thus ignore the vast experience of the innumerable Communist Parties, and not only have to compete with but destroy its revolutionary rival.

Marxism indeed reveals to the student that political parties are the expression of given social forces (classes). The party of the proletariat is the vanguard of the workers, the most conscious expression of working class revolt engendered by the conditions of capitalist society. There cannot, therefore, be two parties both professing the same ends. When the final class alignments take place one is for and the other is against.

It follows from what has been said that the principal task confronting the section of the I.L.P. considering itself Marxist, is to define its exact relation to the party that already claims to be the revolutionary party of the working class. The R.P.C. has in no way faced up to this position at any of its Conferences or meetings, or in its statements.

Apparently, having agreed at last according to Cullen that the "theoretical position of the C.P. is correct, and its heavy literature excellent," the I.L.P., having purified itself, will then utilise the theories of Marx and Lenin, which, we are told, the Party of Lenin is unable to apply. As Marxism-Leninism allows the possibility of only one proletarian party, the "purified" I.L.P. (by the way, it has taken thirty years to get to the point of recognising Marx) will then, it seems, have to expose the C.P. as being a non-proletarian capitalist-supporting party!

To carry the argument any further would be to wander into the cloudless skies of cuckoo-land. All the time, however, the I.L.P. continues to make these ridiculous claims it is still very definitely associated with the Second International, which broke the revolutionary upsurge in Europe in 1919 and 1923, and is the main obstacle to the workers' revolution in Germany to-day. At the same time the C.P. is linked up with a magnificent international organisation born in the heat of revolutionary battle, which has taken part in several revolutions since 1917, which has led the gradual revolutionary break-through of the Chinese peasants and workers, and will before very long lead the German proletariat to decisive battle. If this organisation is not the necessary instrument for the emancipation of labour at this momentous hour, why, then we must wait another generation or more, and this is unthinkable.

The magnificent record of the Communist International is nothing to the I.L.P., but evidence of "rigidity," "inflexibility," &c. The enormous number of C.P. members in gaol, the execution of leaders all over the world, the persecution and hounding about wrought by the bourgeoisie, are simply the unfortunate results of "ineffective Moscow methods"! However, judging by the murder of Sallai and Fuerst in Hungary, who had come straight from the C.I.'s centre, the capitalist class do not appreciate the I.L.P.'s argument about the futility of Bolshevik methods! No, comrades, the bourgeoisie murdered our Hungarian comrades because they realise what many sincere but sentimental I.L.P.'ers do not, viz., that the so-called rigidity of the C.I. expresses the bitter determination and impregnable discipline which the workers are already building up, without which victory is impossible.

In conclusion, the present writer has worked with the comrades of the R.P.C. and knows most of them to be sincere and determined to win through to the correct path.

Many of the I.L.P. branches ready and eager for united front have good grounds for certain resentment because the old sectarian type of C.P.'er has not always taken them seriously. This, however, cannot alter the fact that these sincere I.L.P.'ers can only either continue to

act in a Marxist and Leninist manner, in which case they must take a real step towards unity and join in with the Party of Lenin, or they must move back into the slough of Labour despond.

We hope they will bring to the party of the working class in its hour of need, new vigour, new ideas, new intellectual fighters, and new means of broadening the mass movement, and I am sure they need not doubt the reception that would be given them by the Communist Party workers who are now watching the I.L.P. rank-and-file with anxious eyes.

# MATERIALISM AND THE CONCEPT OF BEHAVIOUR

[We are glad to publish the following contribution for discussion from Professor Lancelot Hogben, whose book, *THE NATURE OF LIVING MATTER*, was reviewed by Clemens Dutt in the issue of the *LABOUR MONTHLY* for October of last year, as it raises a number of important issues in relation to the problems of dialectical materialism. A reply from Clemens Dutt will be printed in next month's issue.—Editor, *LABOUR MONTHLY*.]

THE Editor has invited me to comment upon a recent review of *The Nature of Living Matter* in this journal. In attempting to clarify the ambiguities of my ironical style which enables Clemens Dutt to quote me in three places in the sense opposite to that suggested by the context, I cannot omit to mention one or two points on which my views have been modified since I wrote the book three-and-a-quarter years ago during a period of isolation from current controversies which have since cropped up in these columns. Naturally, I am not prepared to defend every verbal statement which I made when I was only thirty-five years of age. Taken as a whole and in its historic context as a challenge to the idealist reaction manifest in the writings of so many leading scientists and leaders of thought such as Eddington, Haldane, Millikan, Smuts and Julian Huxley, I am not sorry that I wrote it. Until the publication of Levy's excellent book, *The Universe of Science*, it stood alone as an expression of the materialist view by an English-speaking scientific worker. Three main issues are raised by Clemens Dutt: whether the view stated is a genuinely materialist one, whether it conflicts with dialectical materialism and whether it places the advance of science in a category outside the framework of historical materialism.

As regards the first I think that Clemens Dutt does not understand the core of the distinction I draw between the *public* field of knowledge and the *private* field of sentiment. Briefly it is this. What idealists speak of as mind has no relevance to anything but the individual satisfaction of *passive* reflection. When we are engaged in the public (*i.e.*, social) *activity* of investigation we are examining aspects of behaviour in a changing universe. In *praxis* (*vide* Notes on Feuerbach) the antinomy of mind and matter is resolved in the concept of *behaviour* experienced only as characteristics of matter, living or non-living.

The grounds on which I adopted this terminology arise from a cardinal distinction in which I am completely at one with Bukharin's

statement in *Science at the Crossroads*. When A or B says that each is given only his own sensations or each "starts with himself," A and B are making noises which have no connexion with the activity of discovery. Actually A observes B as the historic outcome of the world process, and B observes A as the historic outcome of a world process. For that reason A and B can only co-operate in the social activity of discovering new truths about human behaviour on the tacit admission that each is a member of a social group, and each is pre-conditioned by a certain group tradition. Thus the world view of science is a public world view as opposed to the private world view which individuals entertain under the influence of alcohol or love. Approached from this angle the idealist (or individualistic) assumption that the individual starts with nothing but his own sense data is the view of a man talking aloud to himself in a crowded thoroughfare. He is at liberty to do so, to quote the words which Dutt condemns, in the same sense as I am at liberty to point out to him the danger of being run over by a bus, if he persists in regarding himself as a creature apart from his material (and historic) environment.

To say that this amounts to the point of view which Eddington adopts is misleading. As a scientist, in his own field (when he is expounding relativity), Eddington is looking for a system *invariant* with respect to the single observer. Naturally I agree with him then. All scientists are materialists when they are getting on with their job. Eddington is an idealist when he is delivering lectures in support of religion. When he does so his views are a public affair, because (for one reason) his reputation lends support to the claims of religious organisations. Wherein does this imply any compromise with idealism? The plain man of the quotation from p. 221 is not the author (who is evidently not plain), but (two lines earlier) "the politician" who distrusts a materialist view "because science provides no concept of divine right to fortify social privileges," and the reference to human nature on p. 316 omits the essential historical qualification "deeply rooted in its unsavoury past." Since I wrote a whole chapter to point out that religion is a concrete historical entity, and therefore that the opinions scientists express about it are matters of vital *public* interest, Clemens Dutt must have been too bored to persevere to pp. 257 and 258, in which I state quite simply and unequivocally that my views allow no place for religious belief within the framework of knowledge. Further I state with emphasis that I regard the social influence of religion as wholly retrograde.

As a matter of fact my chief point in raising the distinction between public and private was to controvert a certain orientation in liberal theology with its appeal to personal experience. If a man tells me that yesterday's fog was black or yellow he makes a statement which can still

be made the subject of investigation if he dies on the spot. Such a statement is public in my sense. In so far as it is true, it is a statement about a fog and not merely about one man. If he says that yesterday's fog was beautiful he tells me something about himself, and the possibility of further investigation into such a statement as an isolated noise or a speech symbol related to other modes of behaviour in a particular manner cannot be elucidated by directing attention to the fog alone. Similarly when a liberal bishop tells me that God exists, because he (the Bishop) has a very real and deep experience of his (God's) presence I reply that such a statement may have some bearing upon one bishop's private erotic pre-occupations but throws no light on the existence of the deity (like the fog) as a public issue independent of his own existence. Consequently such contentions provide no justification for the public claims which religions assert in their capacity as public institutions existing independently of an individual bishop. The author of *Empirio-criticism* makes an analogous distinction when he distinguishes between the "good intentions" of his opponents and the "social significance" of their statements.

Whether anybody else cares to perpetuate this verbal trick worries me very little. I have no ambition to create a new sect or a rival system. I used the name publicist because it was new. I wanted to stress a new orientation in the issue between the idealist and materialist outlook arising out of a new orientation in religious apologetics and a new extension of the domain of scientific enquiry. From the standpoint of biology and psychology the current line of division lies in the fact that the idealist claims that his knowledge of himself is primary. To investigate modes of behaviour which are classified as mental he relies on the method of introspection. The materialist affirms that our knowledge of ourselves is secondary to our knowledge of the evolving universe to which we belong. Thus the social activity of advancing knowledge is only concerned with investigating aspects of behaviour. This does not signify an agnostic distinction between *form* which we see and *substance* which eludes us. The distinction between form and substance is meaningless, since it has no relation to practice. Mind is not the substance of which behaviour is the form. Behaviour is what we actually deal with in an investigation.

As regards dialectical materialism with which the reviewer contrasts my standpoint, I may say that I do not disagree with any of Clemens Dutt's six points except the one about the whole and the part. I do not know whether I agree with him in that, because I do not understand what the sentence means. The main points at issue are whether I believe that all movement is mechanical and that physico-chemical laws are the only ones, and whether it is necessary to determine appropriate laws for

different aspects of behaviour in the changing universe. As regards the first, which I have never dreamed of, it suffices to say that I use the word machine (as Engels uses it) to specify a system which conforms to the laws of energetics and not (as Newton uses it) for a system which involves the transportation of matter. Consequently I use the words mechanistic, mechanical and mechanisation as biologists use them and not as they are transliterated from the writings of contemporary Russian writers. I wrote chapter 3 to controvert the naïvely mechanistic view that chemico-physical laws are the only ones and reiterate the view implied on p. 79 in explicit terms on p. 300. With regard to the last point let me frankly state that my quotation on p. 247 from Poincaré lays me open to the charge of lapsing into the "New Realism" which neglects the recognition of qualitative specification as an essential feature of the use of symbolism in Science. After re-reading of Feuerbach, *Anti-Duehring* and the essay called the *Revolution in Natural Science in Materialism and Empirio-criticism* in the light of papers read by Kolman and Bukharin at the International Congress on the History of Science I should be disposed to pay more attention to the danger of reducing the content of science to algebraic symbols. Fortunately, Levy has dealt with this aspect of the idealist reaction very clearly in his new book. Still, if I may revert to praxis, let me say that I devoted two-and-a-half chapters to a vigorous onslaught upon the school of thought which wishes to interpret social phenomena in naïvely biological terms.

I have no wish to make converts from a system called dialectical materialism to another system called publicism, and if my book succeeds in making those who call themselves dialectical materialists take stock of some live issues of the present moment, it will have achieved more than I could have hoped. Dialectical materialists have not yet reached agreement about the contemporary issues which interest me most as a scientist. If Dobb's recent pamphlet and the higher holism expounded by Zavadowsky in *Science at the Crossroads* are dialectical materialism, my views have no relation to it. It is pure idealism to state that "the dialectical conception *proved by Hegel* covers the Darwinian theory of evolution which is the concrete expression of the dialectical process applied to the biological form. . . ." On the other hand, as I stated elsewhere (*Psyche*, October, 1931) in an appreciative article on the visit of a delegation of Soviet scientists, my own views in 1929 and in 1932 are in essential agreement with those stated by Bukharin and Hessen in the symposium from which the last quotation was taken.

My book was about the impact of the concept of behaviour in modern biology upon the traditional controversies between the idealist and materialist schools of belief. In *Feuerbach* Engels emphasises the distinction between the materialism of the encyclopædists and a materialist

view consistent with the concept of evolution and the conservation of energy. Just as Diderot had the misfortune to write before Mayer and Darwin, so Engels must be seen in his historic setting before modern biological work on the analysis of learning. No doubt Engels himself looked forward to the time when the study of cognition would become as he would say a "positive science." Had he lived to see the birth pangs of such a science no doubt he would have been the first to admit that Hegel's negation of negation has less relevance to the technique of scientific reasoning than the chapter on the dialectic would signify. If that surmise is correct I am a dialectical materialist in the sense that I am a Darwinian. I do not usually call myself a Darwinian because a good deal of water has flowed under the bridges since Darwin wrote.

Even since *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* was written water has flowed under the bridges. As against Mach every biologist now believes that lifeless matter existed aeons before theologians and the sense data of scientists. So for that matter do the holists. To-day holism in one form or another is the most popular form of idealism to which theologians turn, and the broad distinction between materialism and idealism as Engels stated it in his own time is no longer relevant to our own. If so, Smuts is a materialist. My aim has been to direct attention to the praxis of investigation, to show that idealism in any form is inconsistent with the praxis of investigation, that holism, the latest form of fideism in the present social economic world situation (p. 289) is inconsistent with the praxis of investigation and that any view of knowledge consistent with the praxis of investigation is necessarily materialistic, because it is compelled to operate within the *material framework of behaviour*. In doing so I have been content to discuss issues which arise out of the material conditions in which the enquiries of Pavlov's school are now receiving generous encouragement in the Soviet Union. In his own time Engels had good historical reasons for emphasising just those points which have now been incorporated in a new defence of theism by the exponents of holism. It is not consistent with the historical emphasis of Engels to reiterate threadbare issues which the younger generation of scientific workers are no longer called upon to face. Again and again Engels repudiates static finalities in science and philosophy. Those who agree with him will now take the initiative in recognising the implications of the behaviourist standpoint, its contribution to a materialist approach to the problem of cognition, and above all where the logic of Hegel stands in relation to scientific reasoning. If they do not undertake this task, they will find themselves storming an empty trench, while the idealist forces are attacking them in the rear.

This brings me to the relation of biology to historical materialism. I made no reference to this issue because I was writing a book about

something else. My views on that topic are stated in guarded terms on p. 169 of a later one, *Genetic Principles*, in which I have devoted a good deal of space to a destructive criticism of the racist standpoint. Clemens Dutt seems to misunderstand what I mean by "ethical neutrality." Where science stands, in relation to the standpoint of historical materialism, raises three principal issues. The first is the way in which the direction of enquiry is determined by the productive forces of a social epoch. In this sense Hessen rightly speaks of Newton's system as an example of bourgeois science in his admirable analysis of the economic roots of Newton's *Principia* (*Science at the Crossroads*). The second is the way in which the field of enquiry of the individual observer is restricted by his social prejudices and group affiliations. In this sense I should prefer to call the pronouncements of some American professors on the Negro question bourgeois *lack of science*. The third issue is what meaning we can attach to what Professor Levy calls the "scientific movement." Surely there is an essential continuity in the corpus of scientific knowledge which scientific workers in one historic configuration carrying on their own work within the material limitations of that historical configuration inherit from their predecessors. Like the author of *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* I think that there is a sense in which all scientific theories are approximate and a sense in which there are some eternal truths. Much of what passes as science in any social epoch is ephemeral. Within this husk there is a kernel from which later generations draw sustenance. It is to this kernel that I refer, when I speak of the ethical neutrality of science. That so much which passes as "science" in drawing rooms is not ethically neutral does not affect the position of one who regards the writings of eugenicists and racists as a chapter in the history of superstition. In practice the distinction between the first and the second of these three issues is recognised by the fact that the Soviet authorities employ American chemists but do not call in American economists.

L. H.

# MODERN WEAPONS AND REVOLUTION

By T. H. WINTRINGHAM

THE nature of the coming working-class revolution in Great Britain has recently been the subject of discussion in the press of the Independent Labour Party, which at the same time has announced the I.L.P.'s conversion to Marxism. It seems regrettable that in this discussion members of the I.L.P. have not referred to the point of view held by Marx. All sections of the I.L.P. appear to be agreed on a proposition that has nothing in common with Marxism: that the revolution in Britain "must be peaceful."

This proposition, when put forward in the past by other counter-revolutionaries, has always been considered by militant Marxists to mean that "there must be no revolution."

In arguing this proposition, all sections of the I.L.P. concentrate attention on the modern weapons of warfare which are at present being developed so rapidly by the imperialists. It will be useful therefore, first, to indicate the I.L.P. position, secondly, to outline that of Marxism, and, thirdly, to deal with the effect of the recent development of military technique on the questions of insurrection and of civil war.

Mr. T. Johnston, in the Glasgow *Forward*, has argued that the principal question of our revolution is that of feeding the population during a revolutionary crisis. He has contrived to write several hundred words on this without saying anything about the amount and importance of the stocks of grain, &c., that are always present in this country, and without mentioning the food resources easily available off our coasts and within the gathering capacity of our fishing fleets. This question, however, is not at present our subject; Mr. Johnston summarised pointedly the I.L.P. position on the larger question of "violence" by his references to "the new technique of violence: the air force and the chemistry force."

"The people," says Mr. Johnston, "who talk of insurrection and violence as a road of escape from poverty are still thinking in terms of barricades and stone-throwing."

"And they must learn that the old proverb now reads that those who take to the bow and arrow will perish by the tank."

(*Forward*, June 11, 1932.)

From the leadership of the majority of the I.L.P. we get the following:

To call on the working class to adopt methods of violence when they are not armed seems to me to be madness.

(Fenner Brockway, *New Leader*, October 2, 1931).

In a revolutionary situation the pacifist (*i.e.*, a member of the "Marxist" party!) cannot stand aside, but must use his influence for the disciplined action of the working class to prevent or limit violence and bloodshed. (Fenner Brockway, *New Leader*, August 19, 1932.)

It is the agreed aim of the whole of this party to work out "a pacifist technique of revolution"—whatever that may mean: it sounds like the schemes for cooking without heat or securing "perpetual motion" without the expenditure of energy that cumber the files of the Patent Office with void specifications.

Mr. C. E. M. Joad, at the I.L.P. Summer School last year, said that:—

Should a revolutionary situation arise to-day the wealthy classes would fight . . . and they would certainly win.

Modern science, applied to military technique, concentrates effective power in fewer and fewer hands. At the moment power rests with the Air Force.

The Air Force could bomb a camp of unemployed, a concentration of strikers, or marching revolutionaries, out of existence in ten minutes.

These extracts summarise the I.L.P. position.

The best summary of the Marxist view on this question is contained in Lenin's pamphlet, *The State and Revolution*, in which Lenin traces the development of the theory of revolution in the writings of Marx, as the latter lived through and studied the revolutions of '48 and the period of the Commune.

After the Commune, Marx formulated the task of the revolution as "not merely to hand over, from one set of hands to another, the bureaucratic and military machine—as has occurred hitherto—but to *shatter* it." (Letter to Kugelmann. Marx emphasised the word *Zerbrechen*, which we translate "shatter"; it can also be translated as "break," "snap," or "crash"; it cannot be translated as "gently persuade to realise our good intentions.")

Engels, in his *Anti-Dühring*, wrote:

That force also plays another part in history (*i.e.*, other than merely perpetuating evil), a revolutionary part; that, as Marx says, it is the midwife of every old society when it is pregnant with a new one; that force is the instrument and the means by which social movements hack their way through and break up the dead and fossilised political forms—of all this not a word by Herr Dühring.

Lenin summed up the Marxist view: "the substitution of a proletarian for the capitalist State is impossible without a violent revolution." (*State and Revolution*.)

That is the Marxist position in general. But Marx, writing in the '70's of last century, suggested that it might be possible for the revolution to occur "peacefully" in Britain and America. Kautsky, and some of

those few leaders of the I.L.P. who have troubled to explore Marxism cursorily before proclaiming themselves a Marxist party, use these statements by Marx to "prove" their point.

Lenin dealt with this in his pamphlet *The Proletarian Revolution and Kautsky the Renegade* (pages 20-22, 1929 edition). "The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is violence in respect of the bourgeoisie, and the need for such violence is caused especially, as repeatedly explained by Marx and Engels in detail (particularly in the *Civil War in France* and the preface to it) by the fact there exists an army and a bureaucracy. But just these institutions in the '70's of last century, when Marx was making his observations, did not exist in England or America (though now they *do* exist) . . .

"Kautsky, the 'historian,' is so shamelessly adulterating history that he forgets the fundamental fact that capitalism of the pre-monopolist era, of which the '70's of last century were just the highest point, was, in virtue of its fundamental *economic* traits (which were most typical in England and America), distinguished by, comparatively speaking, the greatest attachment to peace and freedom. As against this, Imperialism (that is, capitalism of the monopolist era, which has finally matured in the twentieth century) is, in virtue of its fundamental *economic* traits, distinguished by least attachment to peace and freedom, and by the greatest development of militarism everywhere. To fail to notice this in discussing the question as to the extent to which a peaceful or forcible revolution is typical or probable, is to stoop to the position of a lackey-in-ordinary to the bourgeoisie."

The leader of the I.L.P. proclaims that "we must learn from Lenin." We suggest that all leaders of the I.L.P. could well learn that last sentence by heart.

Our position as Marxists on this question is not, as the I.L.P. pretend, that we "desire" a forcible revolution as compared with a peaceful one. In his article on "The Bogey of Civil War," published on September 16, 1917, Lenin wrote "The Bolsheviks will do everything to assure that opportunity for a *peaceful* development of the revolution." He was referring to the opportunity then existing for a peaceful transference of power to the Soviets, still led by Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. We should similarly work for a peaceful advance wherever possible: but we know that when fighting is needed the least costly way is to hit hard and win quickly.

Engels faced and met a grave problem of the technique of insurrection in his preface to *Class Struggles in France*.

The full text of this preface has never been published in Britain, but a carefully expurgated part of it has been used by Social-Democrats on

the continent and in America to show that Engels changed his views and, in later life, was "opposed to violent revolution." In the following quotations the parts expurgated are given in brackets.

Engels dealt with the fact that after 1871 the European capitals—Paris, Berlin, Vienna—were largely rebuilt with wide straight roads, unsuitable for the 1848–1870 technique of street fighting. This change really did make the carrying out of a working-class insurrection more difficult. But he wrote :

Even in the classic time of street struggle the barricade was more of moral than of material value. It was a means of shaking the steadfastness of the military. If it held out until that was accomplished, victory was achieved ; where not, there was defeat. [This is the chief point to keep in mind whenever the chance of a more skilful street struggle is attempted.]

The revolutionary who himself chose the new working class districts of the north and east of Berlin for barricade struggle would be mad. [Does that mean that in the future the street struggle has no rôle to play ? Not at all. It only means that the conditions since 1848 are far more unfavourable for civil war, far more favourable for the military. So a street struggle can only be victorious if this unfavourable nature of the situation is compensated for by other factors. Therefore it will more seldom come in the beginning of a great revolution than in its later developments, and must be undertaken with greater skill. But this may well mean that the passive barricade tactic will be not so preferable as the open attack.]

It will be seen that Engels did not consider the new developments made insurrection impossible ; instead he called for " more skill " in street fighting—a very topical slogan just now. It will also be seen that the excision of the words within brackets completely alters the sense. The Social-Democrat " idealists " who thus edited Engels were committing political forgery—perhaps their only way of finding support for their theories.

We can now, having given our I.L.P. collaborators in Marxist theory something to try their teeth on, deal with the new argument they raise against the working-class revolution : the power of the modern weapons of warfare.

\* \* \* \*

In an article on " Modern Weapons and Warfare " in the LABOUR MONTHLY for August, 1932, the trends of recent military technique were analysed, and the following conclusions reached :

That military technique is developing more rapidly than at any previous time.

That this development implies an increasing dependence of the armed forces on the industry and transport of the whole

D

nation. It therefore is a *weakness* for imperialism, where faced with a revolutionary working class.

That this development fosters the growth of class differentiation within the imperialist armed forces, and prevents the normal operation of their arbitrary discipline.

Without, at the moment, going over this ground again, let us consider the hypothetical effect of such a development on working class revolutions that have actually occurred in the past.

The Paris Commune was suppressed by Versailles troops using the ordinary military technique of the day—inefficient rifles, and field guns firing common round shot.

What would have happened to the Commune if military technique had been at its present level? The question of course cannot be answered in this form. It would not even have been a *Paris* Commune, in modern industrial France (and without modern industry, modern military technique is impossible.) The industrial north of France would have been with Paris. But let us put the question in more real terms :

What would have happened to the Commune if the methods of warfare of the ruling class had, in 1870, depended entirely on the mobilisation of almost all industry and transport ?

What would have happened to the Commune if there had been sharp class differences and friction within the army of Versailles ?

To put the question in this way is to answer it. The Commune would have triumphed. Part of Paris (and of other cities) would have been bombed, probably. Part would have been destroyed. But the destruction of the forces of imperialism in France—starved of the complicated weapons on which they relied, and mainly concerned with suppressing mutinies in their own ranks—would have been more rapid than the destruction of Paris. (In fact the rapidity of this process would have been in proportion to the damage these forces were able to do to Paris.)

The question becomes more actual when we consider 1917. Could the Bolsheviks have seized power and held it for any length of time if modern weapons had been in the hands of Kerensky or General Korniloff ?

Our answer is : yes—because these weapons are never actually in the hands of the imperialists ; they are always, in action, controlled by members of the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie.

Members of the working class and of the petty-bourgeoisie are, in a revolutionary crisis, on both sides of the barricades. On which side would be the bulk of those who control the modern machinery of high-speed warfare ?

Contrast the most effective fighting forces on either side in 1917. The sailors (necessarily the most advanced technically of all the Russian

rank-and-file, since a battleship is a complicated machine) were the leaders of the Bolshevik armed insurrection. With them were the Putilov (and other) factory workers, the most technically competent in Russia, and some machine-gun and armoured-car units. On the other side Korniloff relied on a "Savage Division" of cavalry, and Kerensky on "Junkers" (officer cadets) and Cossack troops. The contrast is striking!

Even the I.L.P. can scarcely argue, after Kronstadt, Kiel and Invergordon, that the Navy is sure to act against a revolutionary government in Britain. In all navies the conditions of service are such as to breed vigorous opponents of the capitalist class—trained to a general level of intelligence and initiative in technical matters that is remarkably high. Therefore in considering the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution and Civil War, and the British Revolution, we can take the Navy as providing more arguments for the Marxist view than for that of the I.L.P.

There remain the questions of the Army and the Air Force.

What are the effects of the development of modern military technique on the Army?

Its fire-power has greatly increased—at the cost of dependence on accurate machinery and skilled repair for its principal weapon (the machine-gun); dependence on the whole of heavy industry for its munitions, and in the field on an uninterrupted stream of supplies.

Its mobility has increased—at the cost of dependence on petrol, a commodity hard to guard effectively from a disaffected population. (Its mobility, however, is little, if any, higher than that of revolutionary forces controlling the bulk of the civilian means of transport.)

It possesses armoured vehicles capable of advancing against fire, and surmounting barricades (which is not the same thing as destroying barricades). These vehicles need considerable skill in handling and repair, depend on petrol, are somewhat "blind" (particularly among houses) and can do little against snipers in a town.

It possesses a new weapon, poison gas, the use of which against an insurrection would rouse into action every section of the population. With this weapon it is impossible even to pretend to differentiate between the revolutionaries and the rest of the population. The use of gas by a capitalist force, in a few working-class streets, would be the most rapid way of disintegrating such a force that could be devised by the stupidity of our great generals.

Modern technique of warfare has also caused, within the Army, acute class differentiation, much technical specialisation (*i.e.*, dependence of large numbers on irreplaceable "key" men) close connection in personnel with the industrial working class, difficulties of arbitrary discipline, &c.

These weapons which the I.L.P. think so invincible are very double-edged indeed !

All the above considerations apply to the Royal Air Force as much as to the Army. But there are technical limitations of this weapon which may also be mentioned.

In Ireland aircraft were found quite useless in dealing with snipers, with roof-fighting, and all the other guerrilla methods by which an insurrectionary advance guard would harry and hold up any attempt by a capitalist force to enter and control a revolutionary city.

The modern high-speed aeroplanes would be of even less use in a city than the slower machines of war-time, because the pilots would have less time to " spot " snipers, &c.

Bombing is as indiscriminate as gas, and as local in its effects. An Air Force does not consist of a number of aeroplanes flying about with bombs on, ready to go into action at a moments' notice. It is a complicated economic unit, of which the parts are so inter-dependent that the withdrawal of a number of individuals, and the unwillingness of another larger number to do their work properly (such as would occur in a revolutionary crisis when the bombs were falling on East-End Tories and Communists alike), would immediately cripple its ability to get machines into the air at all.

The usual resources of a reactionary government in a crisis are students (university, " public " school, and hospital), cadets, and Fascist petty-bourgeois types. " Forces " of this sort may possibly be of some fighting value under some conditions of warfare (though in no actual revolution have they been notable for value of any sort.) That such " forces " could handle tanks, aeroplanes, or even machine-guns successfully is an idea which could only occur to pacifists in a panic.

The development of modern military technique is necessary to each capitalist power in its effort to outstrip its rivals. But look at these new weapons dialectically—to look at questions dialectically is a Marxist method of which the I.L.P. may have heard, or may not ; there seems no evidence to show they have—look at these weapons through the eyes of men who know how they are made and serviced and supplied and handled, and you will see that every advance in the technique of warfare is a new danger to capitalism in the present period of history, the period of new wars and new revolutions.

# MARX AND ENGELS ON IRELAND—IV.

*[We conclude this month the instalments of the Correspondence of Marx and Engels illustrating their attitude on Ireland. The extracts have been made by T. A. Jackson, who has also provided an Introduction and explanatory Notes. The letters printed in this instalment have been specially translated from the German edition of the Correspondence between Marx and Engels now being published by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute.]*

**W**ITH this instalment we conclude the series of extracts from the correspondence of Marx and Engels relating to Ireland. They form, in bulk, only a small fraction of their total output upon the question; but, at the same time they give, qualitatively the essentials of their standpoint. They constitute evidence not only of the amazing thoroughness with which Marx and Engels acquainted themselves with every fact relevant to the political situation before them—but also of the efficacy of the historical method with which Marx's name is indelibly associated—Engels contributing to its formulation in a degree second only to that of his friend and leader.

The appositeness of their joint conclusions to the situation presented to us in our own day is striking. Not only have we a new Fenian movement in the I.R.A. (Irish Republican Army) and sympathetic thereto a new Irish section of the Workers' International, but the question of the separation of Britain and Ireland is raised in a sharper form than ever.

The general conclusions of Marx and Engels may be thus formulated :

1. The Fenian movement as the struggle of a subjected people against both the fact and the causes of their subjection, is essentially revolutionary alike in its methods and its objectives.
2. The relative backwardness of Irish economic development is a reflex co-relative of the advance of British economic development.
3. The political separation of Ireland from Britain is indispensable as much in the interest of the British workers as in that of the Irish workers and working-farmers.
4. Such a separation is an indispensable preliminary to any future federal union of the two peoples as equals. The British workers should take the initiative in enforcing their separation.
5. An Independent Irish Republic would, pending the development of a Socialist world-economy, have to defend its economic reconstruction by means of protective tariffs.

6. The Fenian movement in that it aimed at smashing the power of the landlords and exalting that of the common-people had a certain Socialist tendency.
7. The success of an agrarian revolution in Ireland would have a vital and far-reaching importance for the settlement of the "Social Question" of the whole world.

These things, true 60 years ago, are even truer to-day. Irishmen should note that Marx and Engels penetrated to the heart of the matter with greater precision than any other politicians, English or Irish, living in their day; British workers should note the importance Marx and Engels attached to the Irish question.

### MARX TO ENGELS.

December 4, 1869.

DEAR FRED,

The resolution was unanimously carried in spite of Odger insisting on verbal amendments. I have only given in to him on one point, the omission of the word "deliberate" before "insults" in the first paragraph. I did this *on the pretence that everything a Prime Minister publicly did, must be presumed eo ipso to be deliberate*. The real reason was that I knew that once the first paragraph of the thing was agreed to, all further opposition would be in vain. I am sending you two *National Reformers* wherein is a report of the first two sessions but not the last one. This report is also bad and much of it quite false (through misunderstanding), still it is better than Eccarius' report in *Reynolds'* paper. They are by Harris about whose currency panacea you can also read in the last numbers of the *National Reformer*.

With the exception of Mottershead, who tries to play the rôle of John Bull, and Odger, who always plays that of the diplomat, the English delegates behaved very well. On Tuesday begins the general debate on the attitude of the English working class to the Irish question.

Here we have not only to combat the prejudice but also the stupidity and wretchedness of the Irish spokesmen in Dublin. The *Irishman* (Pigott) not only knew about the debates and resolution from *Reynolds'* which it receives and from which it often quotes. They were also sent direct to it by an Irishman (the resolutions) by November 17. *Up to to-day there is intentionally not a word about it*. The ass was similarly misleading during our debate and petition for the Manchester people. The Irish question must be treated as something quite apart from and unconnected with the rest of the world, and especially dead silence must be observed about the fact that the English workers sympathise with the Irish! What sort of a herd can be got from one cow! The International

on the other hand has organs throughout Europe and the U.S.A. Now this week he has received the resolutions officially with the signatures of the Foreign Secretaries. The matter has also been sent to the *People*. *Nous verrons* (we shall see). Mottershead is against the *Irishman* and will unfailingly make use of this opportunity to poke fun at the "high-souled" Irishmen.

I will yet play a trick on Pigott. I am writing to-day to Eccarius, asking him to send the resolution with the signatures, &c., to Isaac Butt as president of the Irish Working Men's Association. Butt is not Pigott.

\* \* \* \*

ENGELS TO MARX.

MANCHESTER.

December 9, 1869.

DEAR MOHR,

In the reports in the *National Reformer* sure enough some nonsense was put into your mouth. It's always the same these days. The *Beehive* ignores the whole debate, I notice. This they call publicity, just like the old saw (didaskalia) "For spirit, mind and publicity."

I had half expected the business with the *Irishman*. Ireland is still the *sacra insula* (sacred island) whose aspirations must not be confounded with the profane class struggles of the rest of this sinful world. To be sure, this is partly honest craziness on the part of the people, but also partly, just as surely, calculated by their spokesmen to keep their mastery over the peasantry. So it comes about that a peasant nation must always take its literary representatives from the bourgeoisie of the cities and from their ideologists, and so Dublin is apparently to Ireland (I mean Catholic Dublin) what Copenhagen is to Denmark. But to these gentlemen the whole working class movement is sheer heresy and the Irish peasant must not know that the Socialist workers are their only allies in Europe.

But the *Irishman* has been very lousy in other respects this week. If it wanted to withdraw at the first threat of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, then the previous sabre-rattling before was quite wrong. And now there is its anxiety lest there should be other political prisoners elected! On the one hand the Irish are warned, and quite rightly, not to let themselves be lured into any illegalities, and on the other hand they are kept back from doing the only legal thing which is to hand and which has a revolutionary character, and which alone can successfully break down the accepted practice of electing the place-hunting lawyers and impress the British Liberals. Here, clearly, is Pigott's anxiety lest others get in before him.

You remember, too, how O'Connell also was always inciting the Irish against the Chartists although, or even because, these had also inscribed Repeal on their banner.

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MARX TO ENGELS.

LONDON.

*December 10th, 1869.*

DEAR FRED,

*Ad vocem* : Irish Question. I did not go to the Central Council last Tuesday. My "family" did not allow me—although I had undertaken to open the debate—to go out in this fog in my present state of health.

As regards the report in the *National Reformer*, not only is nonsense attributed to me but what is rightly reported is falsely reported. But I did not want any self-advertisement. *D'abord* (to begin with), I would get the reporter (Harris) into trouble thereby. And, secondly, so long as I do not mix myself up with it, all these reports have nothing official about them. If I correct anything, I concede the rest to be correct. And the whole of it, as it is reproduced, is false. Besides, I have reasons not to turn these reports into juristic evidence against me and this will happen the instant I correct details.

The way in which I will present this question next Tuesday is like this: leaving out of consideration all "international" and "humanitarian" phrases about justice for Ireland which go without saying in an International Council, *it is to the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland.* And this is my deepest conviction, and on grounds which, in part, I cannot communicate to the British workers themselves. I did believe for a long time that it was possible to overthrow the Irish régime by *English working class ascendancy.* I have constantly put forward this point of view in the *New York Tribune.* Deeper study has now led me to the opposite conclusion. *The English working class will never do anything before it has got rid of Ireland.* The wedge must be driven in in Ireland. That is why the Irish question is of such importance for the socialist movement generally.

I have read a lot of Davies in extracts. The book itself I have only glanced through superficially in the Museum, so you will place me under an obligation if you will copy out for me the parts relating to common property. You must get hold of Curran's speeches edited by Davis (London, James Duffy, 22 Paternoster Row). I wanted to make you a present of it when you were last in London. Now it is circulating among the English members of the Central Council and God knows when I

shall see it again. It is of decisive importance for the period from 1779 to 1800 (Union) not only on account of Curran's speeches (particularly the judicial ones)—I consider Curran *the only great advocate* (people's advocate) of the 18th century and the *noblest of natures*, while Grattan was a parliamentary blackguard—but because you will find cited therein *all the sources* dealing with the United Irishmen.

This period is of the very greatest interest, scientifically and dramatically. First, the swinish acts of the English from 1588 to 1589 are repeated (and perhaps even exceeded) in 1788-1789. Secondly, it is easy to discern the class movement itself within the Irish movement. Thirdly, the infamous policy of Pitt, and fourthly, what will irritate the English gentlemen exceedingly, proof that Ireland failed because, as a matter of fact, from a revolutionary standpoint *the Irish were too far advanced* for the English King and Church mob, while, on the other side, the English reaction in England (as in Cromwell's time) was rooted in the enslavement of Ireland. This period must be presented in at least one chapter, a monument of shame to John Bull! . . . .

Here are three important points concerning the contemporary Irish movement.

1. Opposition to the lawyers and trading politicians and blarney.
2. Opposition to the dictates of the priests who (*the ones in high positions*) as in O'Connell's time, from 1789-1800, are traitors.
3. The rising of the agricultural labouring class against the farming class on the last meetings. (Similar phenomena from 1795-1800.)

The *Irishman* only rose to fame through the suppression of the Fenian press. For a long time it was in opposition to Fenianism. Luby, &c., of the *Irish People*, &c., were educated men who treated religion as a bagatelle. The government stuck them in prison and then came the Piggotts and Co. The *Irishman* will only be something till these people are out of prison again. It knows this although it is now making political capital out of the Declamation on the felon convicts.

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MARX TO KUGELMANN.

LONDON.

*March 28th, 1870.*

DEAR KUGELMANN,

I send you a letter destined for the Braunschweig Committee, Bracke and the comrades. It will be best if after reading it you pass it on yourself, remembering that it is confidential and not intended for publication.

Here is the letter :

INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION  
CENTRAL COUNCIL, LONDON.

*Confidential Communication.*

. . . . Finally the long-suppressed wrath against the General Council broke forth openly. *Progrès* and *Egalité* jeered, attacked the General Council and declared that it was not doing its duty, for example, it was not issuing quarterly bulletins ; the General Council must denounce direct control over England and must found an English Central Committee which should concern itself only with English matters ; the resolution of the General Council on the arrest of the Fenians was outside its province since it is not its business to occupy itself with such questions of local politics. . . .

' I attach an exact copy of the letter from the General Council to the Geneva Romande Central Committee.

*The General Council to the Federal Council of La Suisse Romande at Geneva.*

At the special session of January 1st, 1870, the General Council resolved :

. . . 5. The Question of the Resolutions of the General Council on the Irish Amnesty.

If England is the bulwark of European landlordism, then Ireland is the unique spot where the hardest blow can be struck against official England.

First and foremost, Ireland is the bulwark of English landlordism. If landlordism falls in Ireland, it must necessarily fall in Britain also. In Ireland this operation is a hundred times easier because the economic struggle there is exclusively concentrated on the ownership of the land, because this struggle is there at the same time a national struggle, and the people are more revolutionary and embittered than in England. Landlordism in Ireland is only maintained by the presence of British troops. The moment the forced union between the two countries ceases to exist, a social revolution, albeit in antiquated forms, will break out in Ireland. The English landlords will not only lose an enormous source of their wealth, but also a great moral source of strength as the representatives of England supremacy in Ireland. On the other hand, the English proletariat will find its landlords in England invulnerable so long as their power is maintained in Ireland.

On the other hand the English bourgeoisie has not merely exploited Irish misery to depress the conditions of the English working class by forcing poverty-stricken Irish to emigrate, but it has in addition to this,

split the proletariat into two enemy camps. The revolutionary fire of the Celtic worker does not easily unite with the massive but slower methods of the Anglo-Saxon. In all the big industrial centres of England there is a deep gulf between the Irish and English proletarians. The average English worker hates the Irish worker as a rival who is lowering his wages and his standard of living. He feels a national and religious antipathy towards him. He considers him almost in the same light as the poor whites of the Southern States of North America considered the negro slaves. This cleavage between the two proletariats is artificially fostered and kept alive by the bourgeoisie. They know this cleavage is the real secret of the maintenance of their power.

This cleavage also persists on the other side of the Atlantic ocean. Irishmen, driven from their homeland by cattle and sheep, betake themselves to the U.S.A. where they form a considerable and ever-increasing proportion of the population. Their one thought and passion is hatred of England. The English and American governments, that is to say, the classes those governments represent, nurse these passions in order to perpetuate those international enmities which hinder any serious and honourable alliance between the working class of both sides and, in consequence, their common emancipation.

Ireland is the only pretext the English Government has for keeping a big standing army, which, if necessity arises, can be let loose on the English workers, as has been seen, after the soldiery composing it have been trained in Ireland. Finally, England shows us to-day what Ancient Rome showed us on a much greater scale. A nation which brings others under its yoke is forging its own chains.

The point of view of the International Association in regard to the Irish question is thus very clear. Its first task is to speed up the social revolution in England. For this purpose a decisive blow must be struck in Ireland.

The General Council's resolutions on the Irish Amnesty serve as introduction to other resolutions. In these latter it is shown that, not even speaking of international justice, a necessary preliminary condition of the emancipation of the English working class is the transformation of the present compulsory union, i.e., the enslavement of Ireland, into an equal and free alliance, if that is possible, or complete independence if it is not.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES

**NATIONAL REFORMER**—A Journal then edited by Charles Bradlaugh. Its policy was declared to be "in politics, Republicanism; in religion, Atheism; in economics, Malthusianism."

**FOREIGN SECRETARIES** :—The corresponding Secretaries for the various National Sections of the I.W.M.A.

"DAVIES":—"A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued nor brought under Obedience of the Crown of England until the beginning of His Majesty's Happy Reign." By Sir John Davies [Attorney-General for Ireland under James I.] 1612.

"CURRAN'S SPEECHES":—"The Speeches of the Rt. Hon. John Philpot Curran." Edited, with Memoir and Historical Notes, by Thomas Davis. Dublin, 1848.

LUBY, THOMAS CLARKE (1821-1901)—Leading Fenian; registered proprietor, and assistant-editor of the "Irish People." Sentenced in 1865 to twenty years' penal servitude.

"PROGRÈS" and "ÉGALITÉ": Bakuninist journals.

PIGGOTT, Richard—Afterwards celebrated as the forger of letters which formed the main basis of the celebrated *Times* articles on "Parnellism and Crime" and the Royal Commission that investigated them.

BUTT, ISAAC (1813-1879)—Lawyer; one-time opponent of Daniel O'Connell; later leader of a succession of Federalist, Parliamentary Nationalist Movements; was "deposed" from his leadership of the "Home Rule Association" by the then young Charles Stuart Parnell in 1877. Butt defended most of the Fenian prisoners, and was active on behalf of the Amnesty Association. The "Irish Working-Men's Association" had only a transitory existence; but it was for a time possessed of branches in Dublin, Cork, Newry, Dundalk, and Sligo.

DR. KUGELMANN was a distinguished gynæcologist living in Hamburg. He had been as a student a comrade with Marx in the Communist League. The "secret" circular given above was sent through Kugelman to the Braunschweig section of the International in reply to the attacks of the Bakuninists (who had captured the Federal Council of the Suisse Romande at Geneva) on the policy of the General Council. The Bakuninists, taking an ultra-"Left" pose affirmed that the Fenian struggle was "merely" Nationalist and therefore "bourgeois" and not at all revolutionary.

# BOOK REVIEW

## THE PHILOSOPHIC PROBLEM OF SCIENCE

*The Universe of Science.* By Prof. H. Levy. (Watts & Co.) 7s. 6d. net.

**D**URING the last year or two there have been several published attempts on the part of bourgeois writers, some of them scientists, to refute or otherwise dispose of the theories and philosophical arguments of such publicists as Jeans, Eddington and Smuts, but none has done this so adequately as this work by Professor Levy. In achieving this result he does not consciously and deliberately state the case for dialectical materialism, nevertheless in the course of discussing the scientific approach to the phenomena of existence he comes as near to employing the dialectical method as any of these writers has done so far. This despite the fact that he has attempted also to get as near to the "scientific ideal" of "pure objectivity" as is possible for the human mind! He refuses to follow Jeans, Eddington and Co. far into the domain of speculative philosophy, and only in the Introduction, and the first and last chapters, are the philosophic aspects of modern scientific discovery discussed extensively.

Professor Levy begins by clearing the ground for scientific examination by traversing the source and nature of human knowledge, and shortly stating the main idealistic and "mathematical" philosophic views which call for critical examination, and by inference for rejection. In succeeding chapters he analyses the "laboratory" procedure of the scientist, and the necessity for abstracting any phenomenon under examination from all extraneous influences. This has resulted in the breakdown of the universe into smaller and smaller "isolated" units in the search after the basis of material existence, but at a certain stage it becomes impossible to isolate completely, owing to the inadequacy of scientific method. In consequence the electron is not and cannot ever be examined directly and strictly scientifically. At this juncture two consequences follow: First, resort is made to mathematical symbolism. Mathematics, originally the handmaid of scientific activity, has become what Professor Levy calls the Queen of Sciences, but for which the better title would be the Tyrant. The other consequence is the necessity to rely on theory which is largely insusceptible of "commonsense" scientific proof, and the building up, on the basis of this bafflement of scientific analysis and the supremacy of scientific theory, of inductive idealistic views of the universe. These inductive views are based on incomplete knowledge of electronic behaviour and the speculative and unlogical application of unproved and largely unprovable theory.

An unusually valuable chapter, one by no means as difficult to the intelligent though unmathematical reader as Professor Levy's introduction suggests, is devoted to the way in which this unjustifiable supremacy of mathematics has been achieved, exposing very thoroughly its shortcomings in the explanation of and application to the phenomena of existence. Another highly important chapter is that on "Scientific Determinism," in which the limitations to the application of the deterministic and completely predictive principle in the scientific examination of phenomena are considered. The critical reader will quickly note that those limitations apply at both ends of the scale of phenomena: in the realm of the ultra-microscopic, and in the realm of large-scale, especially social activity. He will also realise that the reasons governing the former case are very different from those governing the latter. In the one case the scientific

deterministic method is inadequate simply owing to the impossibility of completely isolating or directly examining the sub-elements of the atom. In the other case the scientific deterministic method breaks down because it is not concerned with life as a process, but as a series of isolates, or at best as a *chain* of cause and effect, and the very fact that life is an interactive process renders this method of approach not merely inadequate, but ultimately incapable of supplying a rational explanation of the phenomena of existence.

It is at this point that Professor Levy has failed sufficiently to clarify his own attitude, to treat himself adequately as an "isolate," so to speak. In a final chapter dealing with science as a social venture he seems to indicate that he is in favour of Professor Hogben's division of scientific activity into the spheres of public knowledge and private belief, or preferably into the internal and external relations of science. Yet all through the book, especially in the introduction and the first chapter, he resorts again and again to argument which leads the reader to the conclusion that there can be no such clear-cut and fundamental division. On this question the dialectical materialist must part company with Professor Levy. Admittedly there is a large body of human knowledge which is scientifically verifiable through that very process of isolation and examination in vacuo which is the basic requisite of scientific analysis. But once that process is completed, and even during its course, the dialectical materialist can make no divorce between the ascertained scientific truth and its application in the immediate material environment of the phenomenon examined, still less its application in the mediate environment of human thought. Even the apparently perfect example of a pure internal isolate given by Professor Levy, the number of words on page 221, is not so, not only because it is not universally applicable—the blind, the illiterate, the man unacquainted with the Latin alphabet are all excluded—but because even for the literate "Christian, Atheist, Jew, Socialist, Capitalist and Anarchist" the number of words on page 221 cannot be completely isolated from the meaning of the words on page 221, no matter how much they are scientists "in vacuo." The process of deduction and inference cannot be arbitrarily separated from any apparently pure objective fact. As Professor Levy himself says elsewhere, the scientific method is not a natural one. In fact, it is based, necessarily and inevitably, on a fallacy, the "fallacy of self-isolation, the fallacy of static existence." For "the fact is, of course, that there are no such entities as atoms of oxygen and hydrogen divorced from the rest of reality, entities by themselves." Yet "every law . . . and every method of science, is a law or method in isolation," and therefore in its essence based on a fallacy. Even if the phenomenon being examined were a pure objective isolate, it would need to be studied by another pure objective isolate. In other words, the mind studying it, deducing laws from it and applying those laws would also need to be an isolated system neutral to the environment in which that mind exists. But even if the scientist mind could be neutral to its environment, it would still be faced with the insuperable task of being neutral to itself. Here is a problem in the formulation of universal principle which science alone cannot solve, and resort must be made to philosophy. But the philosophic method is largely inductive, whereas the scientific method is strictly deductive.

Thus, in Professor Levy's book we are once more brought face to face with the apparent contradiction between the scientific method and philosophy of all kinds, including mechanical materialism. Professor Levy has not by any means completely resolved that apparent contradiction, on the contrary he

himself witnesses to it by his continual vacillation between recognition of the impossibility of divorcing science from its environment, and in the first place from society, and the scientific necessity to proceed by the examination of so-called "isolates." But for the dialectical materialist the contradiction is only apparent and superficial, and he will note again and again how Professor Levy is driven to a paraphrase of the dialectical materialist position whenever he truly faces up to that contradiction. And although the "Universe of Science" is by no means a satisfactory statement and application to science of the dialectical materialist position, the Marxist who studies it closely will find in it ample material for the refutation of the present trends of idealistic philosophy, for illustrating the basic difference between mechanical, purely deterministic materialism and Marxist materialism, and for demonstrating that both from the scientific and from the wider philosophic standpoint dialectical materialism is a fully satisfying explanation of the phenomena and processes of existence.

H. C. S.

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